Stand Still, Look Up

a masque of the Super Walking Cities of Manhattan

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A MASQUE OF THE SUPER WALKING CITIES
AND THE CITIZENS OF MANHATTAN

in the voices of nineteen citizens
collected, arranged, and introduced by Surjan

with twenty new supergraphic plates,
and both atlases bound in complete

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL
HYPOSTYLE PRESS

STAND STILL, LOOK UP
a masque of the Super Walking Cities of Manhattan

Surjan, with the aid of Claude
Surjan Super School · Hypostyle Press
surjansuperschool.com

Companion to SUPER WALKING CITIES
Volume I: An Anatomy · Volume II: Shoreline

Twenty new supergraphic plates, drawn procedurally, and the two atlases bound in complete: forty-eight plates more. EB Garamond for argument. IBM Plex Mono for notation.

No black and no dark colour appears anywhere in this book. The darkest ink permitted is a warm taupe, #6E6252. Every channel of every mark sits at or above 82, verified at pixel level against every page.

The voices in this book belong to citizens of Manhattan. Where the editor has arranged, he has arranged for rhythm.

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eight — so am I

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twelve — I am still here

— five of the twelve phrases of the lamp code,
printed on the back of every school card on the island

Foreword

BY SURJAN

In which the author records that he was voted out of his own book by eleven people and a show of hands, and did not appeal.

On the first Sunday of a wet October I stood on the ring deck at Pier Seventy-Six and asked a committee of eleven adults and one child for permission to write this book, and the committee took it to a vote, and I lost.

I want to open with that because everything else here follows from it, and because the version of this paragraph in which I am gracious about the loss would be untrue. I was not gracious. I had two atlases under my arm, forty-eight plates, a decade of drawings, and I had arrived at that meeting with the settled expectation of being thanked.

The motion put by the committee was that the book should not be written by anybody who had never spent a winter at a station. The vote was seven to four with one abstention, and the abstention was the child's, who was eleven and who told me afterwards, on the steps by the eighth pool, that she had abstained because she thought I was going to cry and she did not want to be responsible.

So I wrote a second motion, which is the whole of my contribution to this volume, and it passed nine to two: that the book should be a masque, that every part of it should be spoken by somebody who lives here, and that my name could go on the cover on condition that I write nothing in the middle.

I have kept to it. The foreword, the introduction, and the afterword are mine. The book is not.

WHY A MASQUE

A masque is an old and slightly ridiculous form. It is a performance in which people put on the character of an object and speak as it or beside it, and it was used for four hundred years to flatter monarchs, which is not a recommendation.

I proposed it for two reasons and I was surprised when they took it.

The first is architectural. I learned the form from John Hejduk, who spent the last twenty years of his life populating imaginary towns with characters who were also structures — the water carrier, the lamp keeper, the one who refuses — and who insisted that a building is not a container for a life but a participant in one, with a job, a costume, and a duty of attendance. Hejduk's masques are usually read as melancholy. I have never read them that way. I think they are the most cheerful documents in the discipline, because in a masque nothing is inanimate and therefore nobody is alone in the room.

The second reason is that the committee had already invented the form without noticing. Every station on this shoreline has an object that everybody agrees about, and a person attached to that object whom nobody appointed, and a thing that is done at that object which is not written down and which is done anyway. That is a mask, an actor, and a rite. There are twelve stations. There were twelve masks sitting on the waterfront waiting for somebody to write them down, and I was told, quite sharply, by a man of sixty-eight at the fourth pool, that they had been waiting a while.

WHAT IS IN THE MIDDLE

Part One is the masque proper: twelve stations, twelve objects, twelve people, twelve rites.

Part Two is a set of twelve small sciences. This was not my idea and I fought it for a month. The island runs on invented disciplines — cold arithmetic, the study of gaps, applied stubbornness — practised seriously by people with no institutional standing whatsoever, and I wanted them summarised in a single chapter, and the committee wanted twelve, and the committee had the votes.

Part Three is a chronicle of eighteen days at Hell Gate, assembled from four

hundred sources and one very boring official log, and it is the reason this book exists at all.

THE TWO THINGS I WILL SAY FOR MYSELF

The plates are mine and I am not apologising for them. Twenty were drawn for this volume and forty-eight are bound in from the atlases, and they are the argument in the form I actually know how to make it. If the text of this book was taken away from me, the drawing was not, and the committee has never once suggested otherwise. A woman at the third pool who had voted against me on every motion said, on her way out, that the plates were the reason anybody in that room knew what a supergraphic was, and then she said, do not put that in the book, and I have.

And the prohibition is mine. No black, anywhere, on any page, in any volume. The darkest ink permitted is a warm taupe. For this book I have opened the palette upward as far as I dare — coral, flame, sun, lime, grass, jade, sky, cobalt, violet, magenta, rose — because the people who live here kept describing these machines as bright while I was rendering them as tasteful, and tasteful turned out to be the last place my grey was hiding.

Pier Seventy-Six, the ring deck.
Nine to two.
Surjan

Twenty-One Rules for Reading a Masque

INTRODUCTION, BY SURJAN

Nothing here is difficult. Several things here are unfamiliar.
Those are not the same problem and they have different cures.

1

There are four Super Walking Cities. There have never been more than four. They walk around the shoreline of Manhattan at three hundred feet an hour and they stop at twelve places, and they are in conversation with one another, and the shoreline is the room they are talking in.

2

SWC-01, the Red Shed. Twelve hundred and forty feet, three legs, a wedge of orange panel on a red plinth, carrying one small empty house on its left shoulder.

3

SWC-02, the Letter A. Sixteen hundred and ten feet, two legs, a deck borne on a single enormous letter which is bearing wall, portal, name, and, at the crossbar, a reading room four hundred feet long.

4

SWC-03, the Long Stair. Thirteen hundred and eighty feet, four legs, crossed corner to corner by a stair of two thousand one hundred and forty feet with no handrail on it anywhere.

5

SWC-04, the Cradle. Fourteen hundred and ninety feet, two legs, a hull in a cradle on tapered trestles, forty ballast spheres beneath, and it is the one that carries the water pavilions and puts them down.

6

The twelve stations, in order, up the west side and down the east: the Battery, Gansevoort, Pier Seventy-Six, the West Harlem Piers, Inwood Shoal, Sherman Creek, Hell Gate, Mill Rock, Southpoint, Stuyvesant Cove, Corlears Hook, Governors Roads.

7

The conversation runs on five channels: the lamp, which is counted flashes; the plume, which is shaped steam; the band, which is the painted roof; the bell, which is rung only when another city is in sight; and the bridge, which is the only channel that carries people, and therefore the only one anybody argues about.

8

The lamp code has twelve phrases. You will meet them one at a time and you do not have to memorise them. They are printed on the back of every school card on this island, which tells you everything about how secret they are.

9

In a masque, an object has a job. When Part One says THE OBJECT and then gives you a folding chair or a cold step or a shelf, it is not being coy. The chair is a character. Read it as one.

10

In a masque, a person is attached to an object without being appointed to it. Nobody at Southpoint made Perpetua Vance the widow of the pier. She sat down nineteen years ago and did not stop.

11

In a masque, a rite is a thing that is done and not explained. Where the text refuses to explain a rite, that is the text working correctly and not the editor being lazy.

12

Part Two is twelve invented sciences. They are practised on this island by people with clipboards and no funding. They are not metaphors. Cold arithmetic is arithmetic and it is done in the water.

13

The sciences are cheerful. This confuses visitors, who arrive with a script in which very large slow objects are tragic. The script is wrong and the islanders find it faintly insulting.

14

Part Three is a chronicle of eighteen days. Two of those days are famous and sixteen are not, and the sixteen are the point.

15

The cities in the plates are drawn far larger than they are. This is declared, deliberate, and not going to stop. An accurate drawing of the argument would be too small to see. The cities in the plates are the size of what they mean; the cities in the harbour are merely the size of what they are.

16

Twenty plates were drawn for this book. Forty-eight more are bound in at the back from the two atlases, complete and in order, because a masque without its scenery is a rehearsal.

17

No black appears anywhere. Not one mark, on any page, in any volume of this work. If you find one, it is a printing fault and I would like to be told.

18

The word radical joy will appear four times in this book and never in the middle section, because I am not permitted in the middle section. It means grief turned inside out and made public and architectural. That is the whole definition and there is not a longer one.

19

Nothing in this book is a metaphor. This is the instruction I give at the front of everything I make and it is the only one that is ever ignored.

20

Where a citizen of this island contradicts me, the citizen is correct. There are four such contradictions and I have marked none of them.

21

The correct posture for reading a masque is the correct posture for greeting a city, which is given in full on the back of every school card on this island and which is also the title of this book. Stand still. Look up. One arm is enough.

I

PART

The Masque of the Twelve Stations

twelve objects, twelve people nobody appointed, and twelve things that are done at the water's edge and have never been written down until now

The Bell and the One Who Rings It Late

THE BATTERY · SPOKEN BY DAMIEN OYELARAN, SIXTEEN

A bell is rung only when another city is in sight.
There is no rule about who rings it.
There has never needed to be one.

THE OBJECT

The bell of SWC-02 hangs in the point of the letter, above the water tanks, and it is thirty-one feet across the mouth and the note it makes is below what most people call a note. You feel it in the sternum before you hear it in the ear. Down at the Battery, with the whole bay open, it comes at you twice: once through the air and once off the Brooklyn shore about four seconds later, which is why everybody who has grown up on this end of the island counts to four without knowing they are doing it.

It is rung only when another city is in sight. That is the whole law of the bell and it is not written anywhere except on the bell.

THE ONE WHO

The one who rings it late is not one person. That is the first thing I have to explain and it is the thing visitors cannot hold in their heads.

There is a rope. It is at the head of the ladder on the north face of the point and there is no gate and no lock and the last forty feet of it are worn shiny. Anybody who can climb can ring the bell of the Letter A, and the only condition is the law, which is

that another city has to be in sight, and the harbour will tell you at once if you have got that wrong because everybody within four miles will look up.

So the one who rings it late is whoever is up there at the wrong hour with a reason. My aunt has been the one who rings it late. A man who repairs refrigerators has been the one who rings it late. In January a woman from Red Hook who had never been aboard anything climbed that ladder at two in the morning in a coat that was too thin, and rang it eleven times, and climbed down, and would not tell the crown crew her name, and they did not ask twice.

THE RITE

You go up at an hour when nobody is expecting it. You look until you have found the other city — at the Battery it is almost always the Red Shed away up the North River, a stack of orange the size of a thumbnail. You have to actually find it. You are not permitted to know it is there. You have to see it.

Then you ring, once, and you wait the four seconds for the shore to give it back, and then you ring for as long as you need to.

Nobody counts. That is the part I want people to understand. There is no correct number and no maximum. In the whole history of that rope the longest recorded ringing is fifty-one minutes, by a man whose son had died that morning, and the crown crew brought him tea at the twentieth minute and put it on the deck plate beside him and went away again.

WHAT IS SAID

I rang it late in March, when I was fifteen, and I am going to be exact about why, because the version people tell is nicer than the truth.

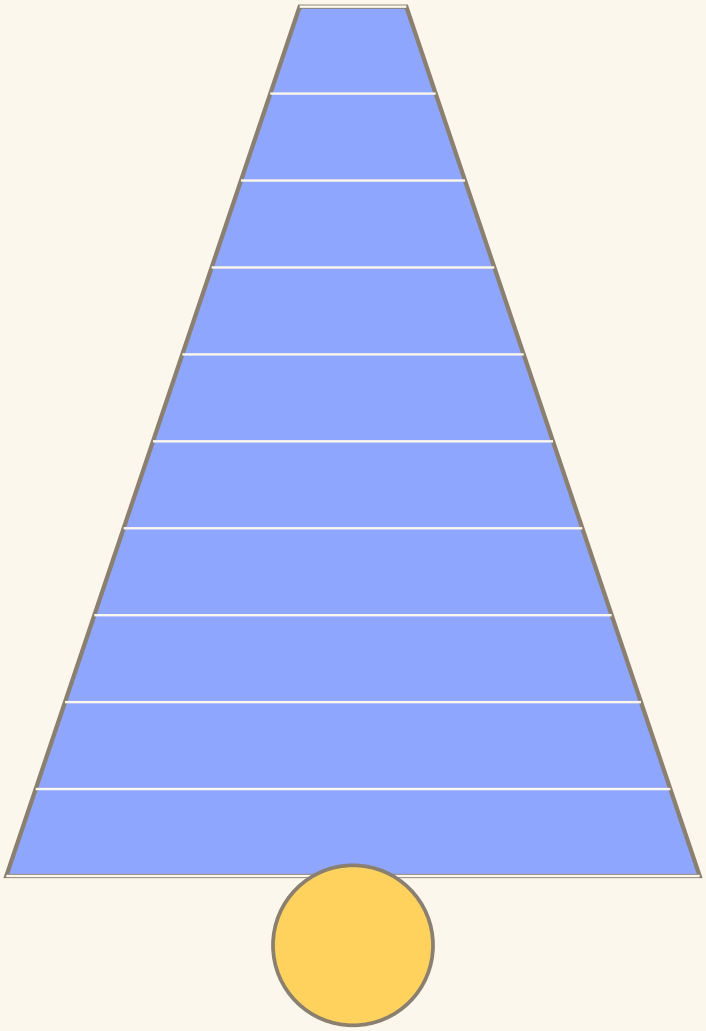
I did not ring it because I was sad. I rang it because I had been sad for four months and I had got very good at it and I could feel myself settling into it like a chair.

I got up the ladder at about one. The Red Shed was up the river with its lamp on the slow single flash. I rang the bell four times and stopped, because four times felt like enough, and then I stood there and understood that it was not enough, and I rang it about thirty more.

And four miles north, the Red Shed rang back.

That is not in the law. The law is about sight, not about answering. Nobody had to. Somebody on the crown of SWC-01 at one in the morning heard a bell they had no obligation to hear, and went and found their own rope, and rang it back at a boy they could not see.

Four seconds out to Brooklyn and four seconds home.
Thirty rings from me.
Thirty rings from four miles away.
Then the tea, on the deck plate, going cold.



IT IS NOT AN ALARM. NOTHING ON A WALKING CITY IS AN ALARM.

PLATE XV

The Bell, in Section

rung only when another city is in sight

The Shelf and the One Who Climbs

GANSEVOORT · SPOKEN BY NOOR ALVAREZ-KIM, ELEVEN

The house on the shoulder is empty.
Everybody tells you that first and everybody is wrong.
It is not the house. It is the shelf.

THE OBJECT

The Red Shed carries a small white house on its left shoulder at a slight angle, as though the house sat down for a minute and fell asleep. Four windows. A chimney that does not work. It was lifted off a block that no longer exists while a dispute about a dead person was still going on, and the machine did not ask anybody, and it stood in the water for eight days afterwards with its lamp off.

Inside the house there is a floor and a shelf. The shelf is eleven feet long and it is at the height of a grown-up's chest, which means it is at the height of my face.

THE ONE WHO

The one who climbs is anybody who can. There is a ladder on the north face of the shoulder and the rungs are worn in the middle, which tells you the number without anybody having to count.

I have climbed it four times. My father has climbed it twice and will not say when. My grandmother climbed it at seventy-nine, which the family discusses.

THE RITE

You bring one thing and you leave it on the shelf and you do not explain it to anybody, and you do not read the folded papers, and you do not touch what is already there.

That is all of it. There is no ceremony and no attendant and no form to fill in and there is nobody at the top to see you do it, which is the entire design.

WHAT WAS ON IT IN APRIL

A ferry token. A photograph of a dog. A tooth. A hair clip. Forty-one pebbles laid in a line by somebody who cared about the arrangement. A glove. A key. Reading glasses with one arm. Eleven folded papers. A small blue plastic horse. A wedding ring, which I did not touch and which I thought about for a week. A shoe.

A paint chip about the size of a stamp, lime, cut off a front door in Astoria with a penknife by a girl called Wren whose father worked on the Long Stair. She told me she put it between the glasses and the horse. I went and looked and it was where she said.

WHAT IS SAID

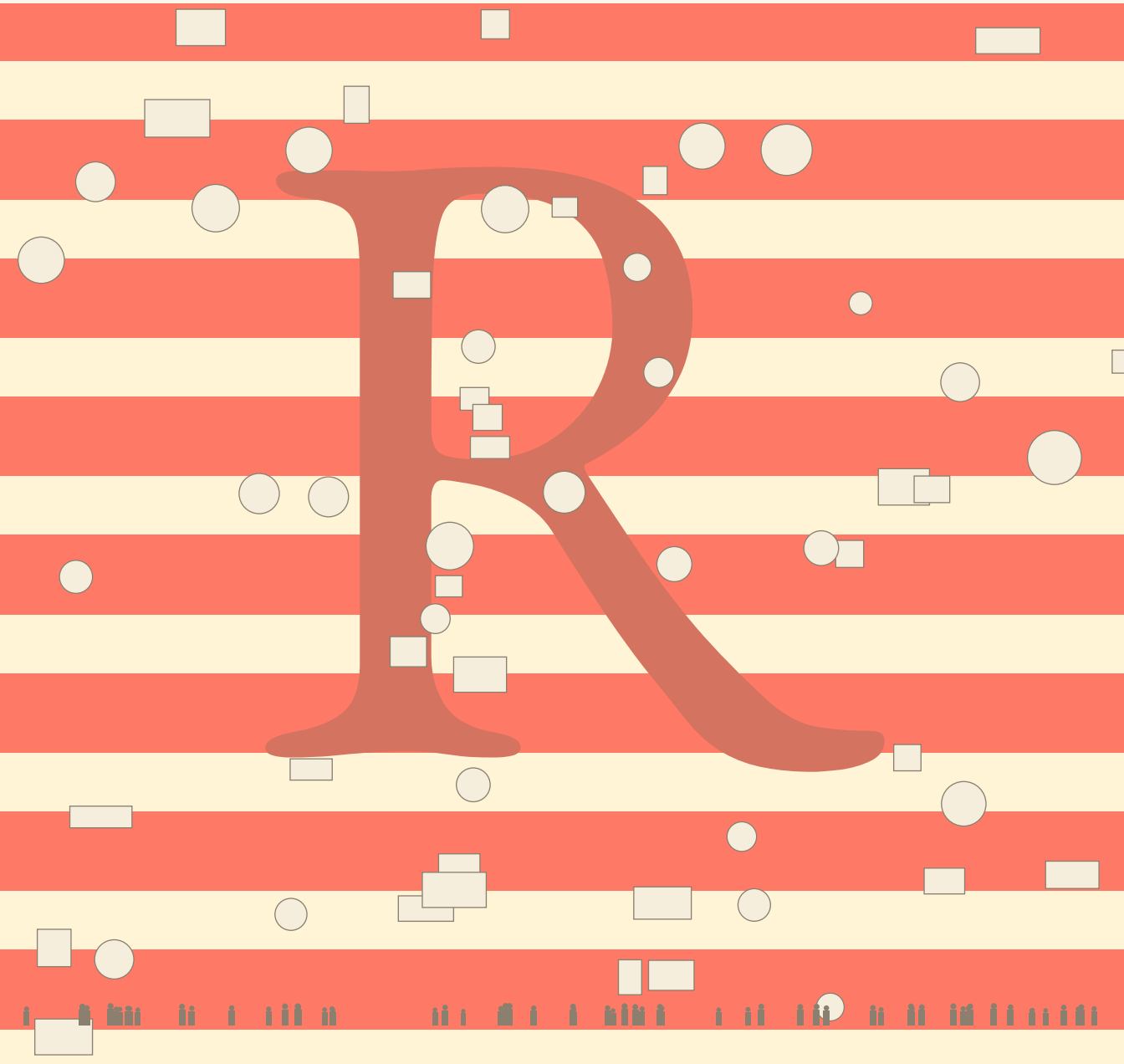
People ask why a walking city carries an empty room. They ask it in a particular voice, as though the answer will be sad.

It is not empty and it is not sad. It is the only room on any of the four cities that has no purpose, and because it has no purpose, everybody's thing fits in it.

If it were a chapel only some people could use it. If it were a museum somebody would have to decide what was good enough. If it were a memorial it would be for one thing and the plastic horse would be trespassing.

It is a room with a floor and a shelf and it goes around this island at three hundred feet an hour carrying a wedding ring and a tooth and a shoe and a paint chip and it does not know what any of them are for, and that is exactly why it can carry all of them at once.

A house that was going to be knocked down
is now the only room on this island
that will hold absolutely anything
and ask you nothing about it.



THE R IS NOT A NAME. IT IS A SENTENCE THAT MEANS: THIS IS THE ONE THAT CARRIES A ROOM.

PLATE VII

The Roof of SWC-01, Painted

eleven acres of a single letter

The Cold Step and the Committee

PIER SEVENTY-SIX · SPOKEN BY ADA NWOSU, THIRTEEN

The plate on the rail says IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE THIS COLD.
Both factions voted for it.
It is the only time that has happened.

THE OBJECT

A step. Three feet wide, cast, going down into the ninth pool, with a rail on the left and a lamp above it that is on all night and a plate on the rail with six words on it.

The step is nine years newer than the pavilion it is in. The Cradle did not build it. We did.

THE ONE WHO

The one attached to this object is not a person. It is a committee of eleven, and it meets on the ring deck on the first Sunday, and anybody may come and anybody may speak, and it runs about three hours and forty minutes.

The committee has factions and I am going to be fair to all of them because my father is in one.

THE KEEPERS

Hold that the pavilion should stay exactly as the Cradle built it, including the mistakes, and that we are custodians and not owners. They are right about the pumps and wrong about nearly everything else.

THE ADDERS

Hold that a thing given to you is yours and that the way to honour a gift is to use it hard. Once proposed a café and were defeated so thoroughly that shall we put in a café is now how you end an argument at Pier Seventy-Six.

THE NIGHT PEOPLE

Do not attend and are discussed at length. Use the pavilion between midnight and four and have made it, by common agreement, the safest place on the West Side at that hour, which nobody can explain and which the police have twice tried to take credit for.

THE CHILDREN

Have one seat with a real vote, rotating every four months. I have had it. I voted on a drainage question I did not understand and I asked four adults to explain it and got four different explanations and voted with the one who did not talk down to me.

THE RITE

The rite is the meeting and the meeting is the rite. Three hours and forty minutes on a ring deck, in weather, about drainage.

There is a second rite, which is that anybody who gets into the ninth pool shouts, and that everybody else on the ring deck pretends not to have heard it, and that this pretending is absolute and has never once broken.

WHAT IS SAID

The big argument was about warming the ninth pool. It is fed straight off the well, which is straight off the harbour, and in February it will stop your breath, and every year somebody gets in who should not.

The Adders wanted a heater. The Keepers said the spiral only works if it ends in the cold. The Adders said a spiral is not a person and does not have opinions.

And then a man called Hector, who is eighty and who almost never speaks at meetings, said, quietly, that his wife had asked to be taken to the ninth pool in the last week of her life, and had been, and had shouted, and had then laughed for about

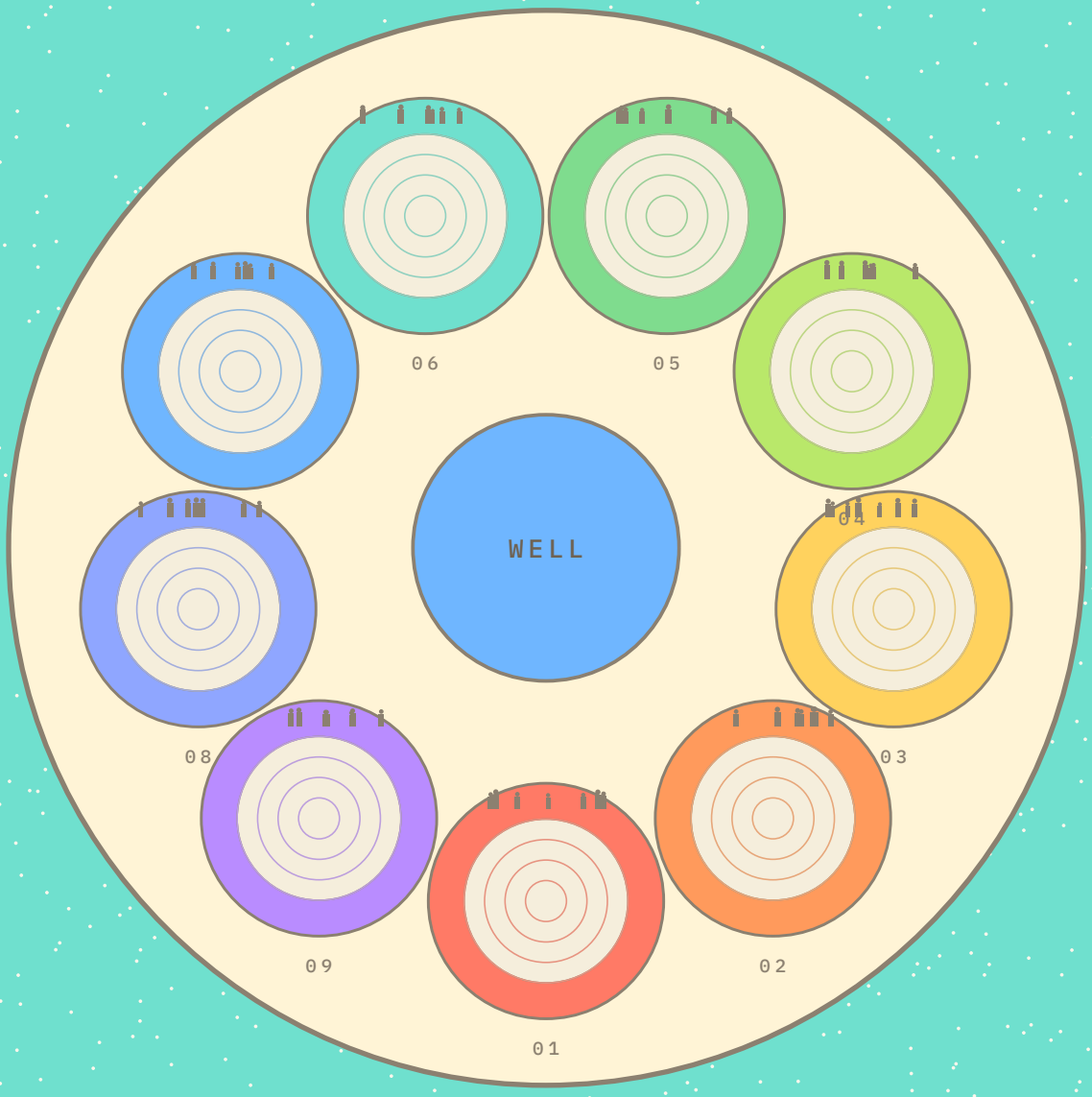
a minute. And that he was not telling anybody how to vote.

What we built was not a heater and was not nothing. A step, a rail, a lamp that is on all night so that anybody at all can get in and out safely at any hour, and a plate.

IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE THIS COLD

Eleven to nil. Both factions. The only time.

NINE POOLS · EACH ONE COLDER THAN THE LAST



THE NINTH IS COLD ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU SHOUT, WHICH IS THE POINT OF IT

PLATE VI

Nine Pools

the aerial the pavilion was designed to be seen in

The Stair and the One Who Counts Flights

WEST HARLEM PIERS · SPOKEN BY WREN OKONKWO, TEN

Thirty-four flights. No handrail.
Everybody stops arguing at seventeen and nobody knows why.
I have three theories and they are all probably right.

THE OBJECT

Two thousand one hundred and forty feet of stair, thirty feet wide, crossing a whole machine corner to corner, open on both sides, no handrail anywhere on it.

When SWC-03 stands at the West Harlem Piers the bottom of the stair is about forty feet from the seawall and anybody at all can walk on and start climbing. About nine thousand people a week do. It is the most used piece of public architecture on this island and it is a set of stairs to nowhere on a machine that is going to leave.

THE ONE WHO

The one who counts flights is whoever is going up beside somebody who is finding it hard, and it is a job that lasts about forty minutes and that you are given by accident.

You say the numbers out loud. You do not encourage. You do not say nearly there, because at flight eleven you are not nearly there and the person knows it and lying to somebody on a stair is a mean thing to do. You say eleven. Then, after a while, twelve.

I have counted for four people. An old man. A woman with a bad knee. A boy

from my school who did not want to be counted for and who was, and who has not mentioned it since. And my mother.

THE RITE

There are plates on the stair and the plates are the rite.

FLIGHT ONE

THIRTY-FOUR TO GO. Beneath it, scratched: YOU CAN DO IT. Beneath that: NO YOU CANNOT. Beneath that: BE NICE.

FLIGHT NINE

A HANDRAIL IS A PROMISE THE STAIR CANNOT KEEP. Beneath it, scratched: THEN MAKE A SMALLER STAIR. Beneath that: NO.

FLIGHT SEVENTEEN

No plate. Nothing at all. This is where everybody stops arguing and the stair says nothing about it.

FLIGHT TWENTY-NINE

SIT. There is a bench. Everybody sits on it.

FLIGHT THIRTY-FOUR

No plate. But it is painted the same colour as flight one, which took me two years to notice and which was decided by somebody who is probably dead.

WHAT IS SAID

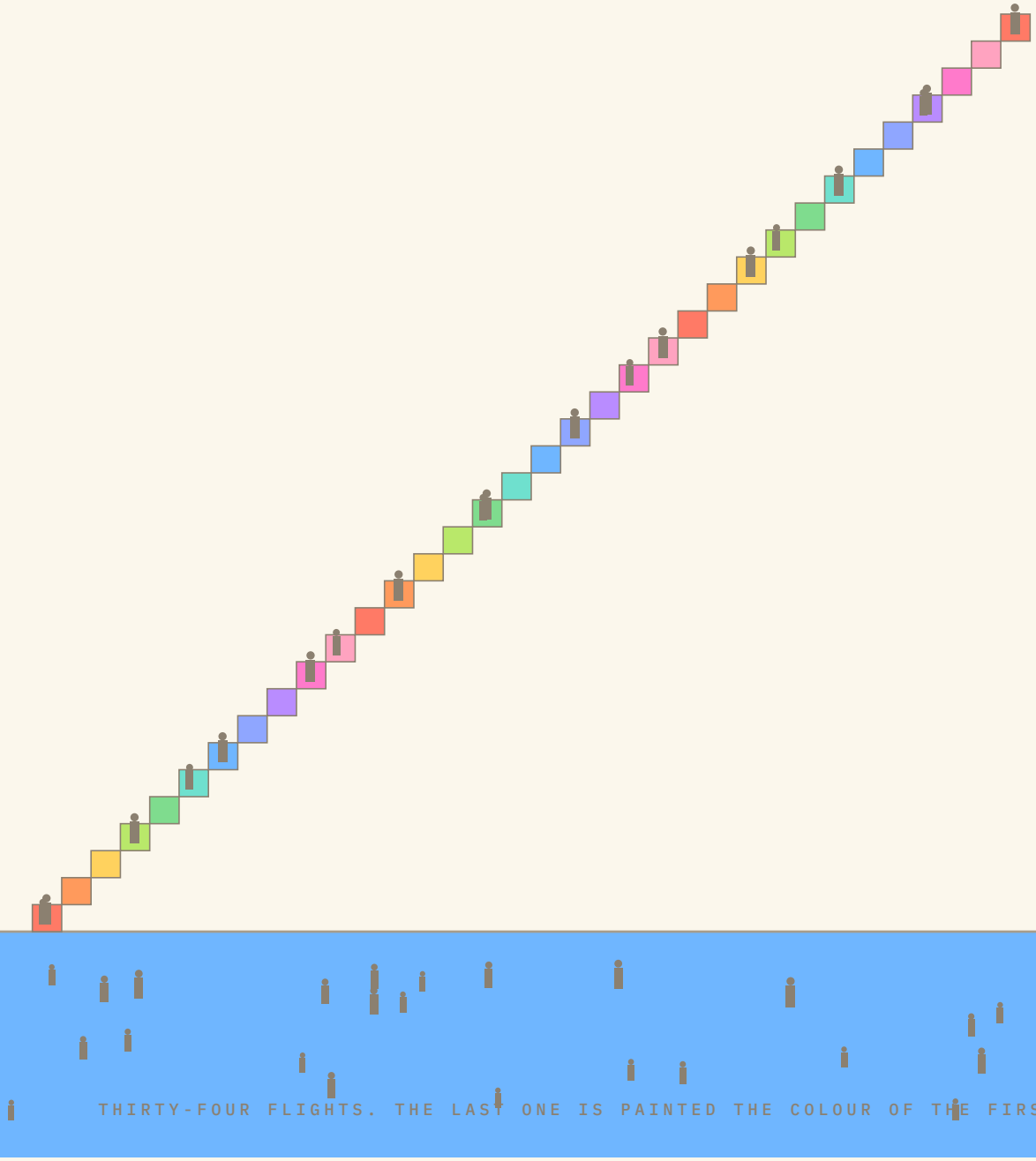
My three theories about flight seventeen. One: it is exactly halfway and the body can do arithmetic even when the mind is being stupid. Two: at seventeen you come level with the top of the clay sheds and the whole east side of the island opens at once like a book put flat on a table. Three: the wind changes.

What I have seen stop at seventeen: two brothers who had not spoken since November; a woman on a telephone; four boys who were being terrible to a fifth boy; and my aunt and my mother, who had been having the same argument since before I was born, and who stopped it at seventeen and started it again at the

bottom, but slower.

THE LONG STAIR · TWO THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED FORTY FEET

NO HANDRAIL; A RULE THAT EVERYONE STOPS ARGUING ABOUT HALFWAY UP



THIRTY-FOUR FLIGHTS. THE LAST ONE IS PAINTED THE COLOUR OF THE FIRST.

PLATE IX

The Long Stair

thirty-four flights and no handrail

The Green Pavilion and the One Who Feeds

INWOOD SHOAL · SPOKEN BY IRIS FENN, TWELVE

It was left and never adopted.
It is white going green and there are birds on it all day.
There was a meeting about removing it. There will not be another.

THE OBJECT

A Super Water Pavilion, the fourth ever built, set down at the Inwood shoal eleven years ago and never taken back and never taken up by anybody either.

The pumps stopped in the second year. The nine pools are now one pool at the level of the harbour. The ring deck is under six inches of water at high tide. From my window at low water it is a white ring going green, and there are cormorants on the east arc from first light and gulls everywhere else and, in October, one heron that everybody in this neighbourhood has an opinion about.

THE ONE WHO

Mrs. Ilunga, who is seventy-four and who has never been on any of the four cities and does not intend to be.

She goes out at low water four days a week in a flat-bottomed boat she does not row well, with a bucket, and she does not feed the birds, which is the part everybody gets wrong. She counts them, and she takes things off the ring deck that should not be there, and she has done this without being asked or funded or thanked for eleven

years.

The bucket comes back full. Plastic, mostly. Once a car battery.

THE RITE

At the removal meeting, which lasted five hours, the Harbour Office had a good case and made it well: a derelict structure, a navigation risk, a maintenance liability with no owner.

Mrs. Ilunga did not speak. She had brought eleven years of counts on index cards in a shoebox and she put the shoebox on the table and sat down.

Somebody from the Office asked what the counts showed and she said, more every year, and sat down again, having already been sitting down.

The vote was not close.

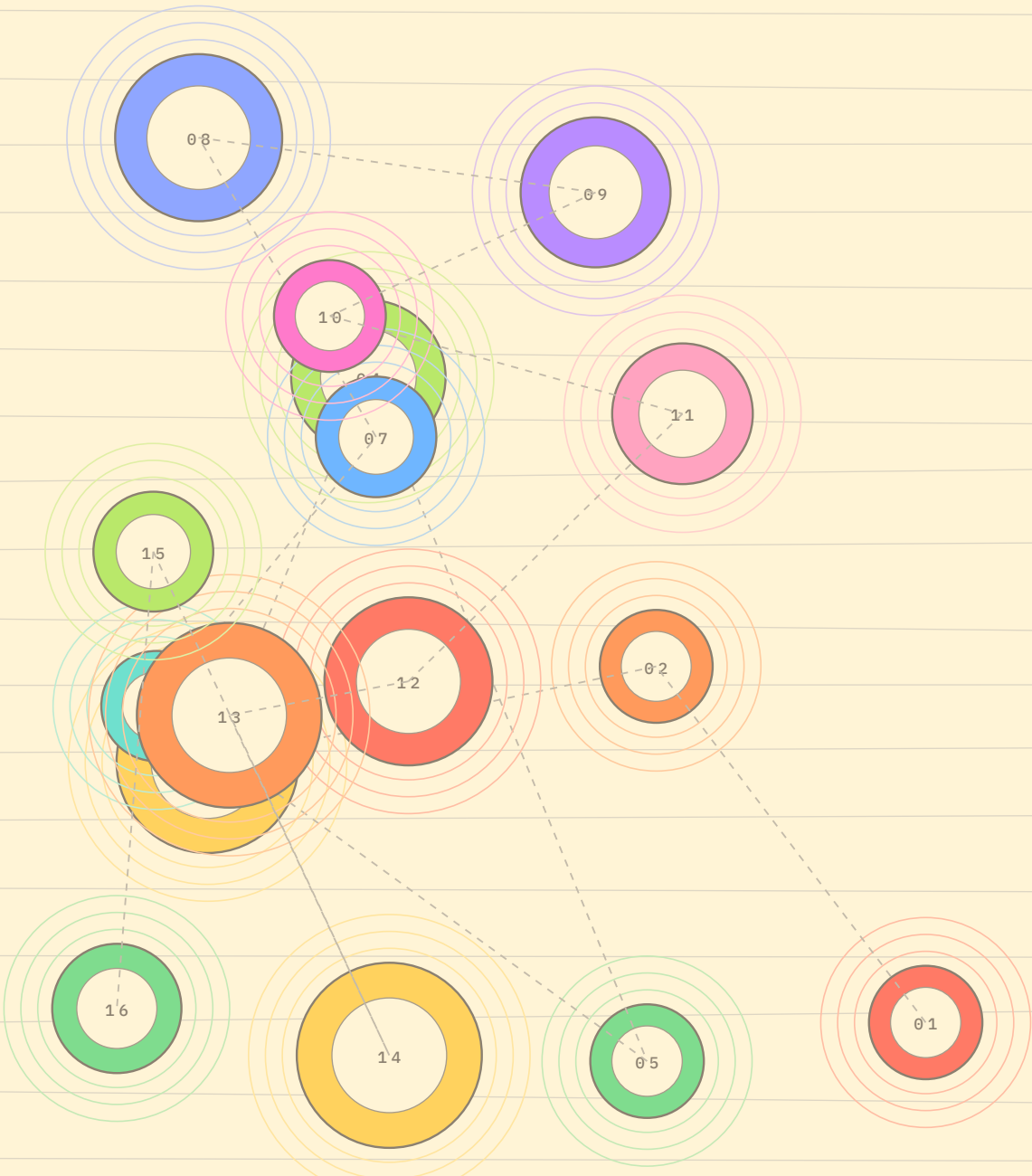
WHAT IS SAID

The rite at Inwood is that when the Cradle comes home to the shoal, which it does most winters, it stands beside the green pavilion and does not take it back.

It could. It has the trestles for it and the crew and the whole afternoon. It has taken nine other pavilions off nine other stations over forty years and it has never once come for this one.

My aunt is on that crew and I have asked her about it every winter since I was six and she gives me a different answer every time, which I have come to understand is the answer.

> *Left, and not lost.*
> *Given away to gulls, who did not ask,*
> *and to one woman with a shoebox, who did not either.*



EACH ONE FILLS WITH WATER AND THEN WITH OYSTERS, IN THAT ORDER

PLATE XIV

Footprints in the Harbour Mud

sixteen pads; each fills with water and then with oysters

The Soft Mud and the One Who Asks You Not to Come

SHERMAN CREEK · SPOKEN BY THEO MARCH, FIFTEEN

This is the shortest chapter in the book and it was negotiated.
Sherman Creek asked for something boring.
I have written something boring. Please respect it.

THE OBJECT

Mud. Soft, deep, and old, over a bed of marine clay, at the mouth of a creek that is mostly culvert now.

The pads sink four feet at Sherman Creek where they sink one everywhere else. It costs the Long Stair an extra day to leave. There is nothing beautiful about this and everybody here is glad.

THE ONE WHO

Mr. Adeyemi, sixty-eight, who has lived on the same street since he was four and who has never been aboard any of the four cities.

He asked to be in this book on one condition, which was that he be allowed to say the thing he actually thinks rather than the thing that makes the book work.

THE RITE

The rite at Sherman Creek is that nothing is organised. There is no anniversary here and no committee and no counting club and no plate on anything, and when the

Long Stair is standing off the creek the people who live here look at it out of their windows and then go and make dinner.

WHAT IS SAID

MR. ADEYEMI: Nobody voted for them. There were meetings for six years and I went to all of them and the meetings were about the colour.

MR. ADEYEMI: They took the fences off this waterfront and everybody says that like it was a gift. It was not a gift. It was a requirement. The machine cannot walk through a chain-link fence. We got the river back as a side effect of an engineering constraint, and if the machine had needed the fences we would still have the fences.

MR. ADEYEMI: I am glad about the river. I am not grateful. Those are two different things and this island has stopped being able to tell them apart, and that worries me considerably more than any of the rest of it.

MR. ADEYEMI: Now write down that we would like fewer visitors and stop.

PLATE IV

A Map Drawn from Memory, Age Nine

north is wherever the Red Shed is standing

The Four-Knot Water and the One Who Swims Anyway

HELL GATE · SPOKEN BY WREN OKONKWO, TEN, FOR HER MOTHER

Nobody swims at Hell Gate.
One person swims at Hell Gate, eleven minutes a year,
and the whole shore comes out to watch her do it.

THE OBJECT

The worst water in this harbour. The Sound empties past Hell Gate twice a day and fills twice a day and at the peak it runs four and a half knots, and it does not run in one direction — there are two counter-eddies either side of the channel that turn the opposite way and a standing boil off the Astoria shore that pilots will not go near.

Between the flood and the ebb the current stops. Not slows. Stops, and then turns and goes the other way. It is called slack water and at Hell Gate it lasts between eleven and nineteen minutes depending on the moon and the wind and what the Sound has been doing all week.

THE ONE WHO

My mother. Once a year, on the longest slack of the summer, which is known a month in advance and which everybody here can recite.

She was on the crew that surveys the bed. She knows the water the way you know a staircase in your own house in the dark. She is not brave about it and she is extremely rude to anybody who says she is.

THE RITE

She goes in from the Astoria shore at the top of slack with two boats out and eleven people watching and she swims across the channel and back, and it takes her about eleven minutes, and the current comes on again about four minutes after she is out.

The Long Stair stands in that water all summer on four legs and it has never once, in the nine years she has been doing this, failed to put its whole lamp on her for the entire eleven minutes.

Not flashing. On. Steady, from thirteen hundred feet, in daylight, which is a ridiculous waste of a searchlight and which the crown crew have been asked about and about which the crown crew say nothing.

WHAT IS SAID

I asked her why she does it and she said, because for eleven minutes a year the worst water in this harbour is a swimming pool, and somebody ought to be in it.

I asked her whether she was frightened and she said, of the water, no. Of the four minutes after, yes, every single time, and that is not the same thing and you should learn the difference early.

I asked her what it is like out there in the middle with the whole channel stopped and a searchlight on her and she thought about it for a long time and said: loud.

Eleven minutes.
Four minutes of margin.
One lamp, on, in daylight, for no operational reason whatsoever.

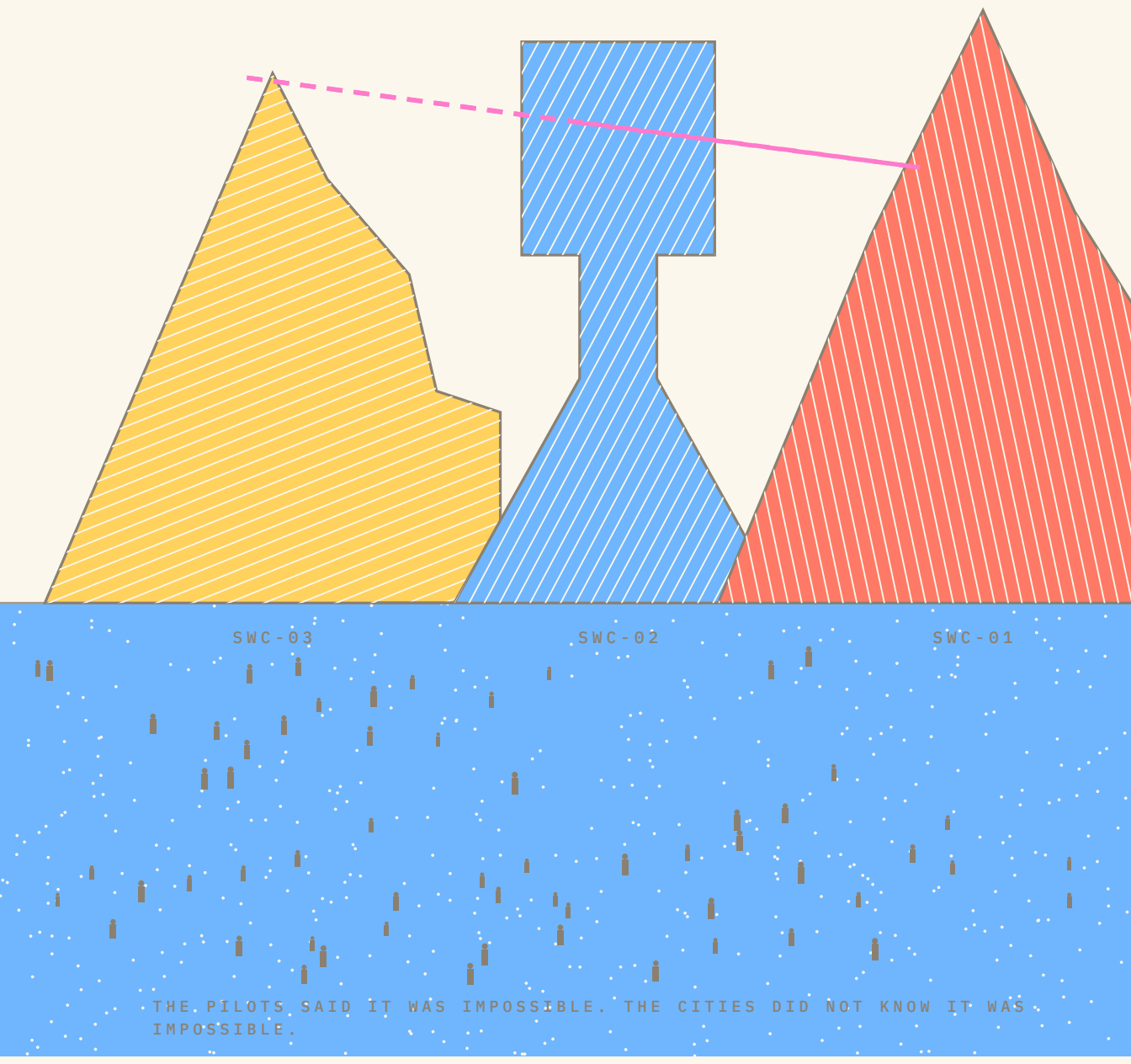


PLATE XVIII

The Colloquy at Hell Gate

three cities standing in a four-knot current on the same tide

The Quiet Rule and the One Who Whispers

MILL ROCK · SPOKEN BY JUNIPER HALE, NINE

You do not shout at Mill Rock.
Nobody knows where the rule came from.
Everybody keeps it, including people who are angry.

THE OBJECT

A small island with trees on it that the cities stand beside rather than on. When the Letter A is at Mill Rock the windows of the reading room look straight down into the tops of the trees, which is the only place in this harbour where sixteen hundred feet of machine is at eye level with a bird.

THE ONE WHO

Everybody. That is the strange part of this mask and it is why the committee argued about whether Mill Rock could have one.

There is no keeper here. There is a rule and the rule keeps itself, and the person attached to the object is whoever happens to arrive next.

THE RITE

You do not shout at Mill Rock. Not on the water, not on the shore, not on the deck. If you are on the ferry you stop talking about a hundred yards out and you do not decide to do it, it happens to you.

The bell is not rung here even when another city is in sight, which is the only place on this shoreline where the law of the bell is set aside, and it is set aside by nobody, by common agreement, without a vote.

Children learn this at about four. I learned it at four. Nobody told me. I have asked eleven adults where the rule came from and I got eleven answers and none of them agreed and all of them were said quietly.

WHAT IS SAID

Here are four of the eleven answers.

ONE

There is a burial ground on Mill Rock from a long time before any of this. My teacher says this is true and that it is not the reason.

TWO

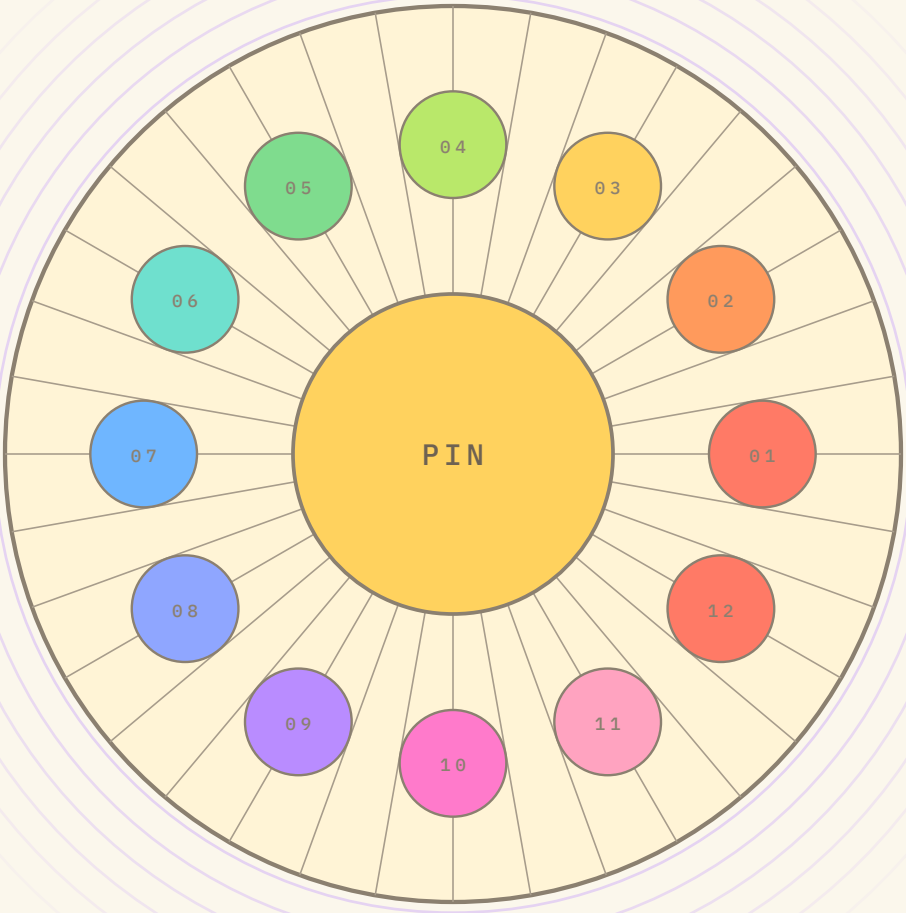
The acoustics. The rock is small and hard and it throws sound back at you badly and shouting there is unpleasant. A man who repairs boats gave me this one and it is the most likely and the least satisfying.

THREE

Somebody's mother asked for quiet once, forty years ago, and was obeyed, and it never stopped. Four people gave me a version of this and no two of them agreed about the mother.

FOUR

Because the Letter A is the loudest object in this harbour and there ought to be one place where it is the quiet one. A woman on the ferry gave me this and then said, do not write that down, I have just made it up, and I have written it down because it is the best one.



01 THE PIN IS WARM ALL WINTER

02 CHILDREN ARE ALLOWED TO TOUCH IT

03 IT MAKES A SOUND LIKE A HELD NOTE

TWELVE BEARINGS, ONE PIN; THE LEG TURNS IN IT AND THE CITY DOES NOT NOTICE

PLATE V

The Collar Seen from Underneath

twelve bearings, one pin, warm all winter

The Folding Chair and the Widow of the Pier

SOUTHPOINT · SPOKEN BY PERPETUA VANCE, SEVENTY-SEVEN

I am a mask in this book. He told me so.
I said: young man, I am a woman with a folding chair.
He said: that is what a mask is.

THE OBJECT

An aluminium folding chair with a blue nylon seat, bought in a hardware shop that has since closed, repaired four times, twice by me and twice by a stranger who did it while I was in hospital and who has never identified himself.

I take it to the end of the Southpoint pier every evening and I put it down in the same place, which has a mark on the concrete now, which I did not make on purpose and which I am aware of.

THE ONE WHO

My husband built the collars. The great hinged rings the legs turn in. Twelve bearings and a pin. The pin is warm all winter, children are allowed to touch it, and it makes a sound like a held note.

He did the second and third and supervised the fourth, and he had a burn on his forearm in the shape of Long Island which he showed to people at parties until I stopped him.

He died on the eleventh of March and I have been on that pier every evening

since. Nineteen years. About six thousand nine hundred evenings, less the hospital and the two years my hip was bad.

THE RITE

At some point in the evening I say goodnight to whichever city is standing off Southpoint. Eleven flashes with a torch. It takes about half a minute. My arm gets tired, which annoys me.

It says goodnight back. Every time, for nineteen years, including the two years when my neighbour's boy did it for me with the timing all wrong.

WHAT IS SAID

People ask me whether it knows me. It does not. There are two hundred people on a crown on any evening and they work in shifts, and over nineteen years the number of human beings who have answered my torch is probably eight hundred.

It is not one relationship. It is eight hundred people, none of whom I have met, each of whom saw a light on a pier and decided that the correct use of thirty seconds of their evening was to answer it.

People then ask whether that is worse. I cannot understand the question and I have stopped trying.

People ask whether I do it for him, and I have answered this already: no, and also obviously yes, and both of those are true at the same time, and if that troubles you then you have not buried anybody.

People ask whether it is sad. It is the least sad thing I do.

THE EVENING OF THE ACCIDENT

Four years ago every city in this harbour went dark. All four. No lamp, no plume, nothing on any crown. It had never happened and it has not happened since.

My daughter told me not to go out. I went out. I set up the chair and poured the flask and sat in front of a black river with a fifteen-hundred-foot shape in it that was not speaking to anybody.

At about ten past nine I said goodnight.

Nothing, for a long time. And then the lamp came on and it did not say eleven. It said seven. I am sad.

And I said eight. So am I.

And it said eleven, and I said eleven, and then every city in this harbour said eleven to every other city, one after another, all the way down the island, and behind me on the seawall about forty people I had not known were there were doing it with their telephones.

I did not turn round. I did not want anybody to see my face and it was mine.

Eleven.
Seven.
Eight.
Eleven.
Eleven.
Eleven.

PLATE XVII

Night: Four Lamps, One Conversation

from any roof on the island you can see at least two

The Nine Hundred Lights and the One With the Van

STUYVESANT COVE · SPOKEN BY DELLA MOSS, ELEVEN

The first thing ever said with a lamp meant nothing.
Somebody answered it anyway.
That is the whole anniversary and we do it every November.

THE OBJECT

Anything that makes light. Telephones, torches, bicycle lamps, a camping lantern, and, four years running now, the headlights of a van belonging to a man called Errol who reverses it up to the seawall at half past six and leaves the engine running for two hours and will not take money for the fuel.

THE ONE WHO

Errol. But before Errol, and this is the part of the story that matters, a woman called Ester Vane, who ran the electrical shop on SWC-03, who was not interested in architecture, and who died before anybody thought to interview her.

She built the first lamp out of a marine searchlight, a gearbox, and a shutter made from the door of a stove. It took four months. The crown crew called it the kettle. For the first eight years the cities had only the plume, which does not work in the dark, so every evening for eight years the conversation stopped mid-sentence and had to wait for morning.

THE RITE

On the right evening in November, at seven, everybody on the shore at Stuyvesant Cove and Corlears Hook and Southpoint takes something that makes light out to the seawall, and when the cities flash we wave it back and forth over our heads for two minutes.

It is not organised. Every few years somebody tries to make a committee for it and it does not take.

WHAT IS SAID

There had been a meeting about the code and the meeting had ended in an argument about whether a code was patronising. So Ester Vane went up at dusk with four people and pointed the kettle down the river at the Red Shed and flashed it three times, because three was the number of people who had bothered to help her that morning and she thought it was funny.

Nothing happened. They waited an hour. It was cold. Two people went down.

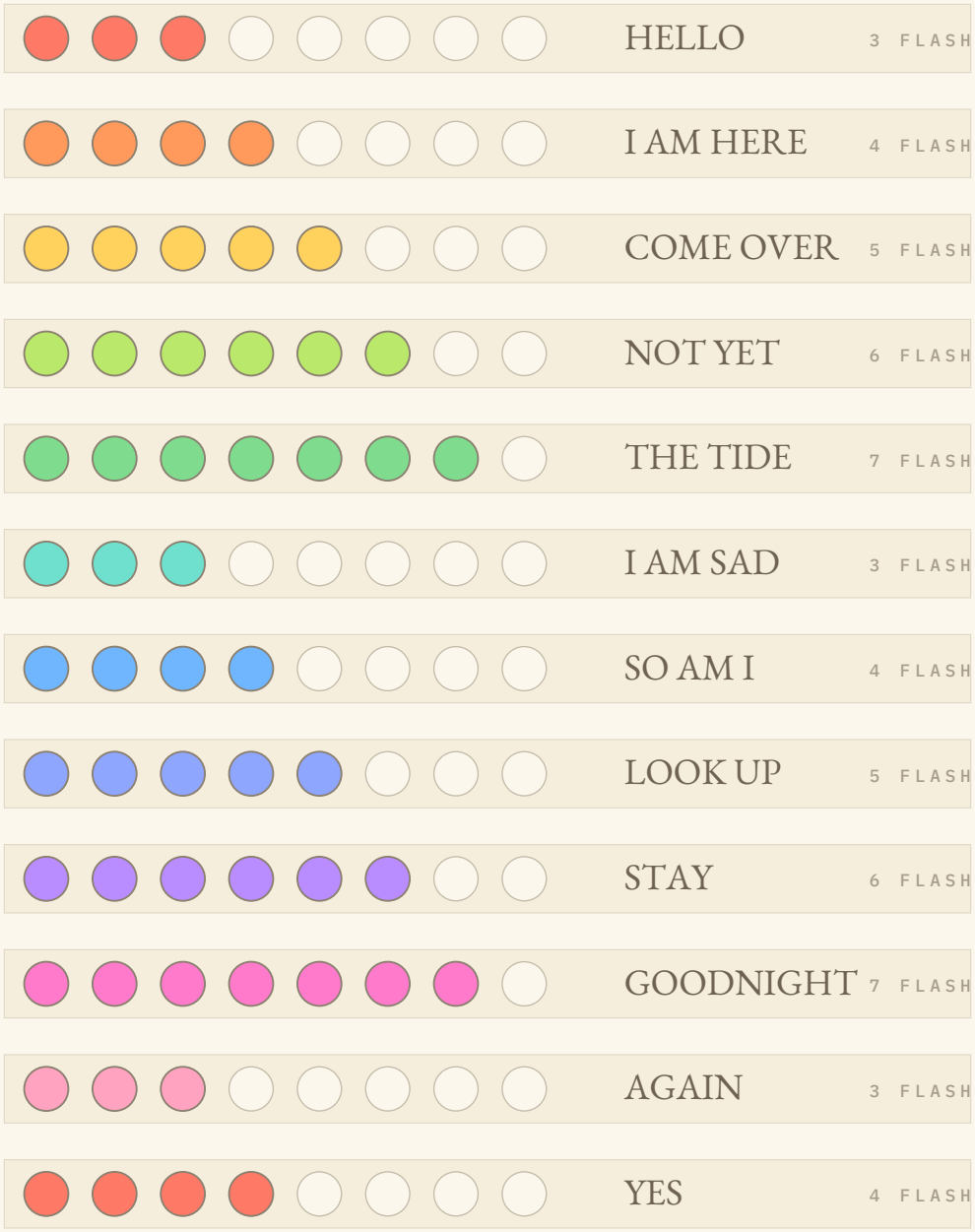
And then, four miles away at Corlears Hook, somebody on the crown of the Red Shed who had seen three flashes and had no idea what they meant took a hand lantern out of a locker, climbed onto the highest rail they could find, and waved it back and forth over their head as hard as they could for about two minutes.

One person. A hand lantern. Four miles.

My great-uncle was up there and he says Ester Vane sat down on the deck plate and put her hands over her face and did not speak for a long time, and then said: all right. Three means come over.

> *Three flashes, meaning nothing.*
> *One lantern, meaning: I am here, I saw it,*
> *I do not know what you are saying,*
> *I am saying it back.*

Last November I counted nine hundred lights on our stretch before I lost track, and out in the dark the Long Stair had its whole lamp on us, steady, for the entire two minutes, which is not in the code and never has been.



THERE ARE MORE THAN TWELVE; THESE ARE THE ONES THE CHILDREN LEARNED FIRST

PLATE III

The Lamp Code

twelve things a city can say to another city at night

The Sunk Pavilion and the One Who Goes Down

CORLEARS HOOK · SPOKEN BY SAM PTAK, TWELVE

The first pavilion ever built is on the bottom
in eleven feet of water and you can see it from the seawall.
It was not lost. It was put there, on purpose, with singing.

THE OBJECT

Pavilion One. Nine pools, a well, a ring deck eleven hundred feet around, a bad frame, and forty years of patching that eventually ran out of things to patch.

It is on the bottom off Corlears Hook in eleven feet of water. On a clear day at low tide you can stand on the seawall and see the whole ring of it, white going grey-green, with the well in the middle as a darker circle, and if the light is right you can count all nine pools.

THE ONE WHO

Ms. Okwuosa, who is forty-one and who dives it four times a year with a club of six and who was nine years old on the day it went down and who was in the water when it did, which was not allowed.

THE RITE

They did not scuttle it quietly and at dawn, which is what the Harbour Office wanted.

Four hundred people came. There was food, badly organised. Somebody had made a banner with the wrong date on it. The Cradle stood off the Hook all afternoon and did nothing, having built the thing forty years before, and at about six the crew opened the flood valves by hand, which took two hours and which they could have done in nine minutes from the deck.

It went down very slowly. It is a ring, so it went down evenly, and the last thing above water was the rail of the ninth pool.

And people sang, and nobody had agreed what to sing, so for about four minutes there were three songs going at once, which everybody who was there mentions and which nobody regrets.

WHAT IS SAID

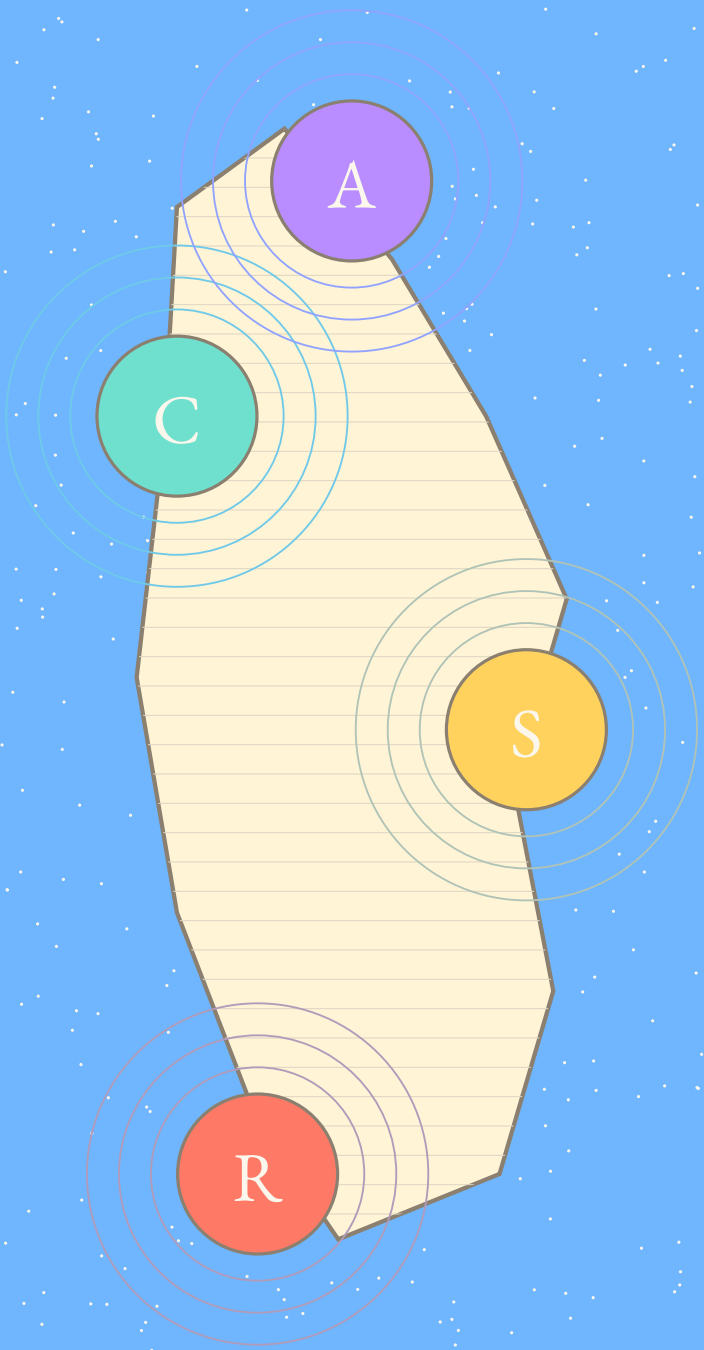
MS. OKWUOSA: I was nine. I was in the water because my brother was supposed to be watching me and was not.

MS. OKWUOSA: I want to say that I understood what was happening, and I did not. I thought it was breaking. I was nine and I thought something enormous was breaking in front of four hundred people who were singing about it.

MS. OKWUOSA: I go down four times a year. There is nothing to do down there. I sit on the ring deck at eleven feet, which is a thing you can do for about forty minutes, and the light comes through and it is green and the whole shape of it is still perfectly legible, all nine pools, in order, the way it was drawn.

MS. OKWUOSA: My mother asks me every year why I go down and I always say the same thing, which is that it is the only one of the eleven pavilions that will still be exactly where I left it.

THE ISLAND WITH FOUR CITIES ASLEEP ON IT



AND IN THE MORNING THEY WILL NOT BE WHERE YOU LEFT THEM

PLATE XX

The Island with Four Cities Asleep on It

and in the morning they will not be where you left them

The First Light and the Two Who Compete

GOVERNORS ROADS · SPOKEN BY TEODORO BAPTISTE, FOURTEEN

The Letter A sleeps here.
There is a competition about who sees it first in the morning.
It is not official. Nobody adjudicates. It is taken very seriously.

THE OBJECT

First light on sixteen hundred and ten feet of blue and cream, in deep water, from about three miles away, seen from either the St. George side or the Red Hook side.

It is a bad object. It is not a thing. That is the joke of this mask and the committee let it stand: the twelfth object in the masque of this shoreline is a few minutes of light on a Tuesday.

THE ONES WHO

Us and them. Red Hook and St. George. Nobody started it. It has been going since before I was born and my father says it was going when he was my age, and his mother says the same, which cannot be true of all three of us and which I have decided not to investigate.

THE RITE

You go out before it is light. You do not use binoculars, which is the only rule and which is enforced by shame. You wait. When you can see it — actually see it, not

know where it is — you send a message to the other side.

The message is always the same three words and I am not going to print them because they are rude.

There is no scoring. There has never been scoring. Somebody proposed scoring nine years ago and was told, by both sides at once, to sit down.

WHAT IS SAID

I have won eleven times and lost, I estimate, four hundred.

The best morning I have had was one I lost. Fog on our side, none on theirs, and at about five-forty my telephone made the noise and I swore, and then it made the noise eleven more times, because eleven different people in Red Hook had all sent it at once, which has never happened before or since.

And then, and this is why I am telling it, at about six the fog went off our side and there it was, and it was worth having lost.

My father pilots the four-fifteen and he has crossed this bay eleven thousand times and he says the boat goes quiet every single time the Letter A comes up out of the haze, and that in eleven thousand crossings it has never once not gone quiet.

There is a nurse who rides with us most mornings who has taken that crossing for twenty-two years and who still stands up. I asked her why and she said, because it is coming up the bay for us, and I said, it is not, it is going to Stuyvesant Cove, and she said: Teodoro. Do not be a lawyer about it.

THE FOUR ASLEEP AT THE BATTERY · ONE SCALE

NOBODY HAD TO BE TOLD TO COME DOWN AND LOOK

SWC-02 THE LETTER A 1610 FT
SWC-04 THE CRADLE 1490 FT
SWC-03 THE LONG STAIR 1380 FT
SWC-01 THE RED SHED 1240 FT

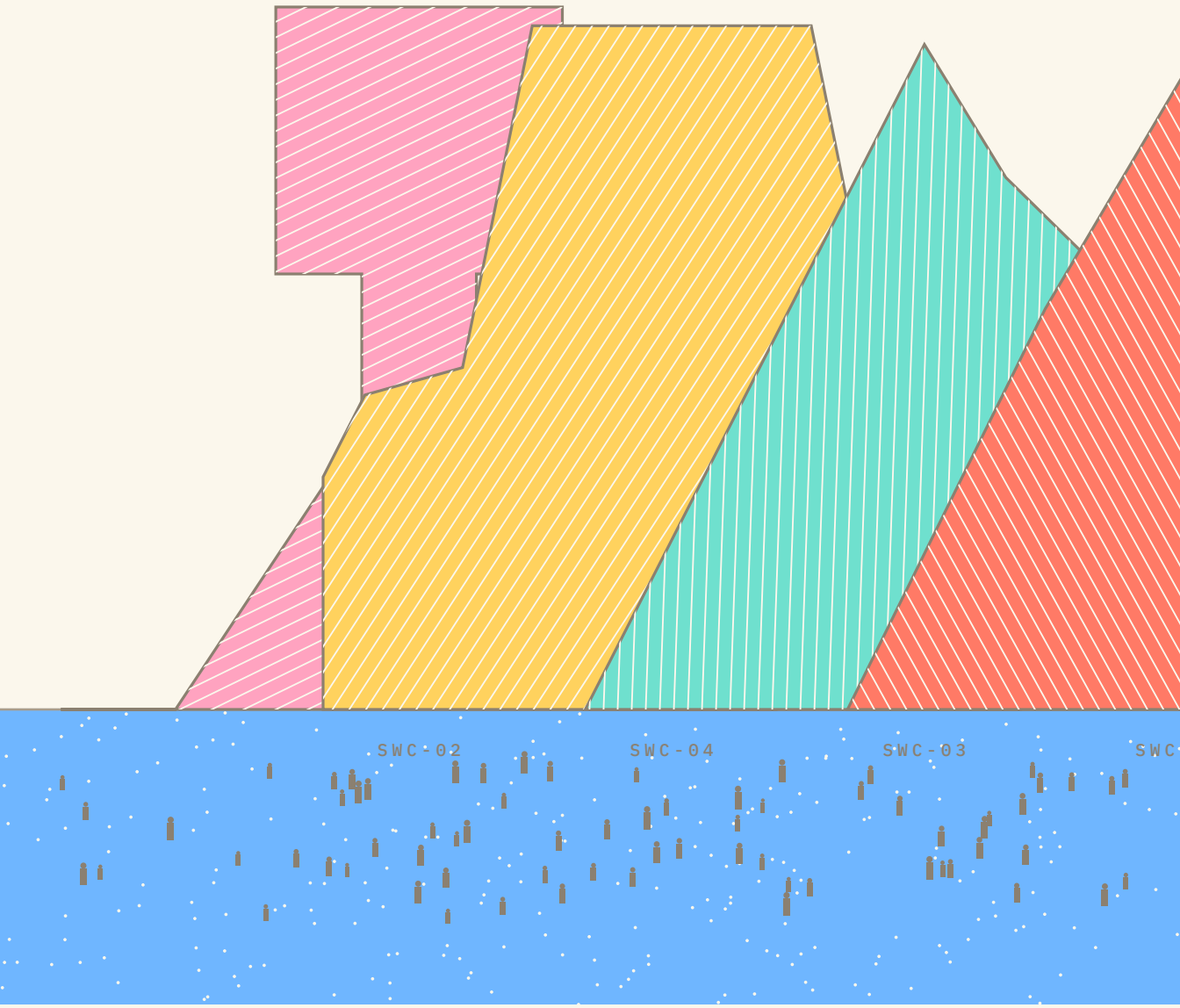


PLATE I

The Four Asleep at the Battery

four cities at one scale, low water, an ordinary Tuesday

II

PART

Twelve Small Sciences

disciplines invented on this shoreline by people with clipboards and no funding, practised seriously, and published here for the first time

The Science of Waving

SET DOWN BY BO LINDQVIST, NINE, EAST HARLEM

Six steps are printed on the back of every school card.
I am adding a seventh and I have been told it can stay.

Every child on this island gets a school card and on the back of it are six steps for greeting a city, and everybody learns them at about six and forgets that they learned them, and at about eleven rediscovers them and is embarrassed, and at about thirty starts doing them properly again. That last part is according to my sister, who is thirty.

STEP ONE · STAND STILL

Both feet. On stone if you can find it. Nobody knows why stone. The best answer I have collected is from Mrs. Vance at Southpoint, who said: because then you are a thing that is not moving and it is a thing that is moving, and one of you has to be still or it is not a meeting.

STEP TWO · LOOK UP

All the way. Until your neck hurts. Everybody thinks until your neck hurts is a joke and it is not a joke, it is a measurement. If your neck does not hurt you have looked at a wall.

STEP THREE · RAISE ONE ARM

One is enough and two looks anxious. This is the funniest sentence printed by any government anywhere and whoever wrote it should be found and thanked.

STEP FOUR · WAIT

It is eleven hundred feet away, it is slow, and not everybody on the crown is looking at you. The card does not say how long. Most people wait about a minute. Mrs. Vance waits as long as it takes and she has a chair.

STEP FIVE · WATCH THE LAMP

One flash means it saw you. That is all it means. It does not mean it knows you, or is thinking about you, or that your day will improve. Yes. I saw you. That is the entire content and it is enough.

STEP SIX · PUT YOUR ARM DOWN

And, says the card, do not tell anyone you cried.

WHY STEP SIX IS WRONG

I have thought about this for a year, which is a long time when you are nine, and I have decided that step six is a kindness that has been taken seriously for too long.

It was meant well. It means: this will move you more than you expect, and that is normal, and nobody is going to make fun of you. That is a good thing to say to a six-year-old.

But the words it uses are do not tell anyone. And I know four adults who have never told anyone, and one of them is my sister, who has been going down to the water alone since she was fifteen and who told me last month at the bottom of the stair that she had thought she was the only one.

She is not the only one. It is printed. Somebody in an office wrote a sentence that assumes every child on this island is going to cry when a city sees them, and had it printed six hundred thousand times, which makes it the least secret fact in this harbour.

STEP SEVEN · TELL SOMEBODY

Tell the person next to you on the seawall. They did too. That is why they are standing there.

HOW TO WAVE AT A CITY · SIX STEPS

1

STAND STILL

BOTH FEET, ON STONE IF YOU CAN FIND IT

2

LOOK UP

ALL THE WAY UP, UNTIL YOUR NECK HURTS

3

RAISE ONE ARM

ONE IS ENOUGH AND TWO LOOKS ANXIOUS

4

WAIT

IT IS ELEVEN HUNDRED FEET AWAY AND SLOW

5

WATCH THE LAMP

ONE FLASH MEANS IT SAW YOU

6

PUT YOUR ARM DOWN

AND DO NOT TELL ANYONE YOU CRIED

PRINTED ON THE BACK OF EVERY SCHOOL CARD ON THE ISLAND

PLATE XVI

How to Wave at a City

six steps, printed on the back of every school card

Cold Arithmetic

SET DOWN BY THE NINTH POOL CLUB, AGES SEVEN TO EIGHTY

Nine pools. Each colder and lower than the one before.
The arithmetic is done in the water and it does not go on paper.

Cold arithmetic is the study of how long a person can stay in each of the nine pools and what happens to them in there, and it is practised at four pavilions and argued about at all eleven.

The pools descend. Pool one is hot enough to make you sleepy. Pool nine is fed straight off the well, which is straight off the harbour, and in February it will stop your breath.

THE FIRST FINDING: THE NUMBERS ARE NOT THE POINT

We began by timing people, because that is what you do. We have four years of times and they are useless. They vary by body, by month, by breakfast, by mood. The record for pool nine in February is eleven minutes, held by a man of sixty who we now think was being stupid.

What is not useless is the order. Nobody, in four years, has ever gone from pool one to pool nine directly and stayed in. Everybody who tries comes straight back out. Everybody who walks the spiral — one, two, three, all the way round — gets in and stays.

The descent is the whole machine. The pavilion is not nine pools. It is one pool that takes forty minutes and gets harder.

THE SECOND FINDING: THE SHOUT

Everybody shouts in pool nine. Everybody. Four years, several thousand entries, no exceptions recorded, including four people who went in specifically to prove they would not.

It is not a decision. It arrives about two seconds after the shoulders go under and it comes out of people who have not raised their voice in years.

And on the ring deck everybody pretends not to have heard it. That is the rite and it is absolute and we have never seen it broken, not once, not by children, not by tourists, who somehow learn it in about ninety seconds without being told.

THE THIRD FINDING: WHAT COMES AFTER THE SHOUT

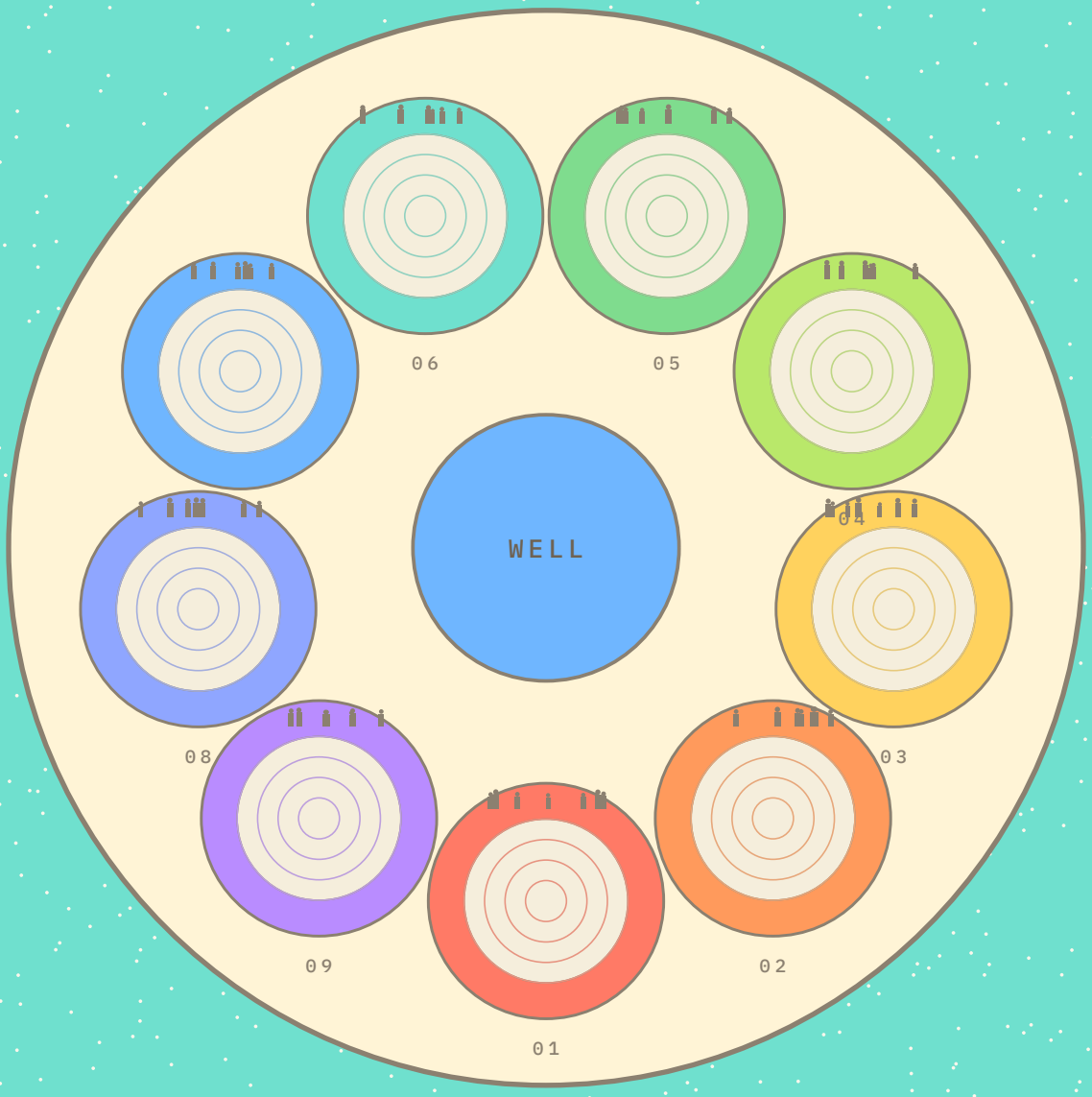
This is the finding we are proudest of and it took four years to be sure of.

After the shout, in pool nine, in the cold, with everybody pointedly not looking, people laugh. Not all of them and not straight away. About two-thirds, within a minute.

We do not know why and we have stopped trying to find out. A swimming teacher told us it is the breathing. A doctor at the third pool told us it is the vagus nerve and then said, but honestly, who knows. Hector, who is eighty and who is the oldest member of this club, said: it is because you find out you can.

Two seconds to the shout.
One minute to the laugh.
Forty minutes to get there in the correct order.
And the ring deck, all around, hearing nothing at all.

NINE POOLS · EACH ONE COLDER THAN THE LAST



THE NINTH IS COLD ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU SHOUT, WHICH IS THE POINT OF IT

PLATE VI

Nine Pools

the aerial the pavilion was designed to be seen in

The Study of Gaps

SET DOWN BY SAM PTAK, TWELVE, CORLEARS HOOK

The lamp code has twelve phrases.
The study of gaps is about the parts in between.

The code is counted flashes with two seconds between phrases and ten between sentences. That is the standard and it is in the Harbour Office table and no crew on this harbour keeps to it.

The study of gaps is the measurement of how long a city actually waits, and what the waiting does to the meaning. There are four of us and we have six years of stopwatch data and one very annoyed teacher.

FINDING ONE: THE ANSWER GAP

A yes that comes back in under four seconds is not the same as a yes that comes back in ninety. Everybody on this island knows this and nobody had written down the numbers.

Median answer gap across six years: eleven seconds. But the distribution has two humps. There is a cluster under five, which is everything practical — the tide, I see you, goodnight — and a cluster between sixty and two hundred, which is everything else.

Nothing sits in the middle. There is a valley between about nine and forty seconds where almost nothing lands. We call it the trough and we do not have an explanation for it and it is the most solid thing in our data.

FINDING TWO: COME OVER

Three, come over, is the only phrase that is regularly repeated without an answer in between.

The record is at Gansevoort, four years ago: the Red Shed said come over to the Cradle eleven times over five hours and was told not yet ten times before it got yes.

The gaps in that exchange get longer each time on the Cradle's side and shorter each time on the Red Shed's. By the eleventh, the Red Shed was asking every four minutes and the Cradle was taking nine minutes to say not yet.

You can see the whole argument in the numbers. That is what this science is for.

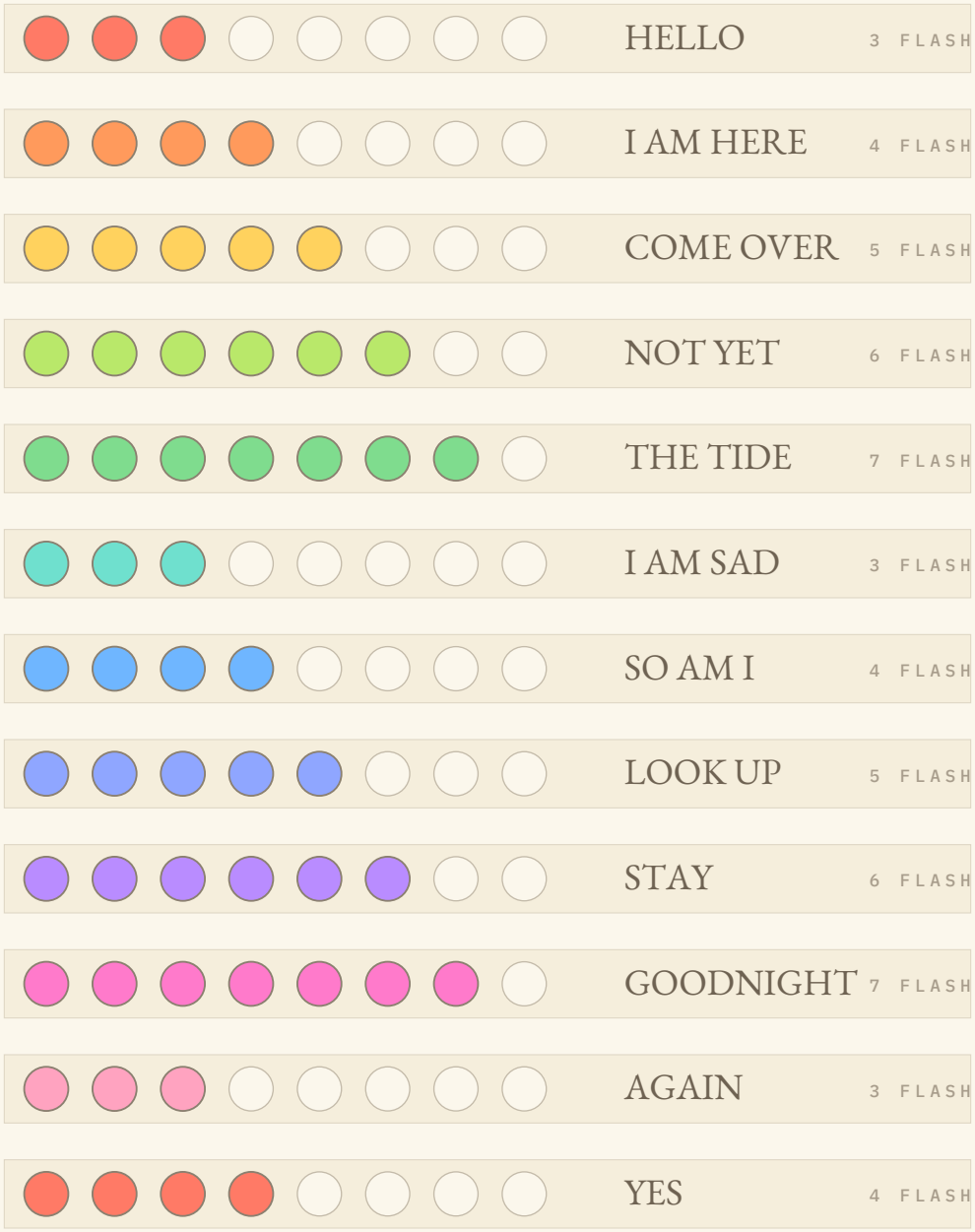
FINDING THREE: THE LONG SINGLE

The long steady beam held on another city is not in the table. The Harbour Office will not put it in the table. The crews will not stop using it.

We have timed four hundred and six of them. Range: nine seconds to four minutes eleven. Median: fifty-two seconds.

It is used most in November and least in June. It is almost never answered with a phrase; it is answered with another long single about seventy per cent of the time and with nothing at all the rest.

We asked eleven adults what it means. We got eleven answers and four of them cried, and we are including that because we said we would record what we observed.



THERE ARE MORE THAN TWELVE; THESE ARE THE ONES THE CHILDREN LEARNED FIRST

PLATE III

The Lamp Code

twelve things a city can say to another city at night

Weatherless Weather

SET DOWN BY THE WEATHER CLUB, TWO HUNDRED AND SIX MEMBERS

We do not measure weather.
Weather is already measured very well by people with equipment.

Every hour, at every station where a member is present, that member writes twelve numbers on a card. The categories were argued about for an entire winter and have not changed since.

JOY. GRIEF. NOISE. SILENCE. TIDE. LAMP. STEAM. SONG. RAIN. CROWD. COLD. WAITING. Each nought to nine.

There is no definition of any of them. This was deliberate. A researcher came and spent a day asking what our operational definition of joy was and a nine-year-old at Sherman Creek eventually said, it is when you know and you write it down, and the researcher went away and published a paper about us which is wrong.

SIX YEARS OF CARDS

JOY PEAKS TWICE

August, which is obvious, and the second week of November, which is not. The November peak is the higher of the two. It is the highest reading in the entire record and it occurs in the cold and in the dark.

GRIEF DOES NOT DIP IN AUGUST

This is the finding nobody expected and the one we are proudest of. Grief runs nearly flat across the year. It rises slightly in March and slightly at the end of school. It does not fall when joy rises. They are not on a see-saw. Two hundred and six

people with cards found that out and it took six years.

WAITING IS HIGHEST WHERE THE CITIES ARE NOT

Obvious. But those stations also score higher on lamp, which is not. The best explanation we have is written on the back of a card by a twelve-year-old at Mill Rock: WHEN IT IS NOT HERE YOU LOOK AT THE LAMP MORE BECAUSE THE LAMP IS THE ONLY PART YOU CAN STILL SEE.

SILENCE AND SONG RISE TOGETHER

Correlated at about seven-tenths, which we had to ask a maths teacher to help us work out. The evenings with the most singing are also the evenings with the most silence. We think both require everybody to stop doing something else.

THE FLATTEST DAY

The fourteenth of February, three years ago. Fog. No city visible at any station. Nothing above three in any category all day. Eleven members independently wrote WHAT IS THE POINT on the back of their cards. We keep those eleven together in an envelope and we look at them when somebody wants to leave the club.

WHY WE REFUSED THE INSTRUMENTS

The Harbour Office offered us light meters, sound meters, and a small weather station for each pier. It was kind and it was serious. We held a meeting about it that ran four hours and we said no.

An instrument would measure the harbour. We are not measuring the harbour. We are measuring what it is like to be a person standing at the edge of this island at a given hour, and the only instrument for that is a person standing at the edge of this island at a given hour.

Four hundred and ten thousand cards. Two hundred and six members, of whom eleven have died, whose cards we keep.

THE WEATHER OF THE CONVERSATION · ONE YEAR

MEASURED BY CHILDREN, HOURLY, WITH NO INSTRUMENT

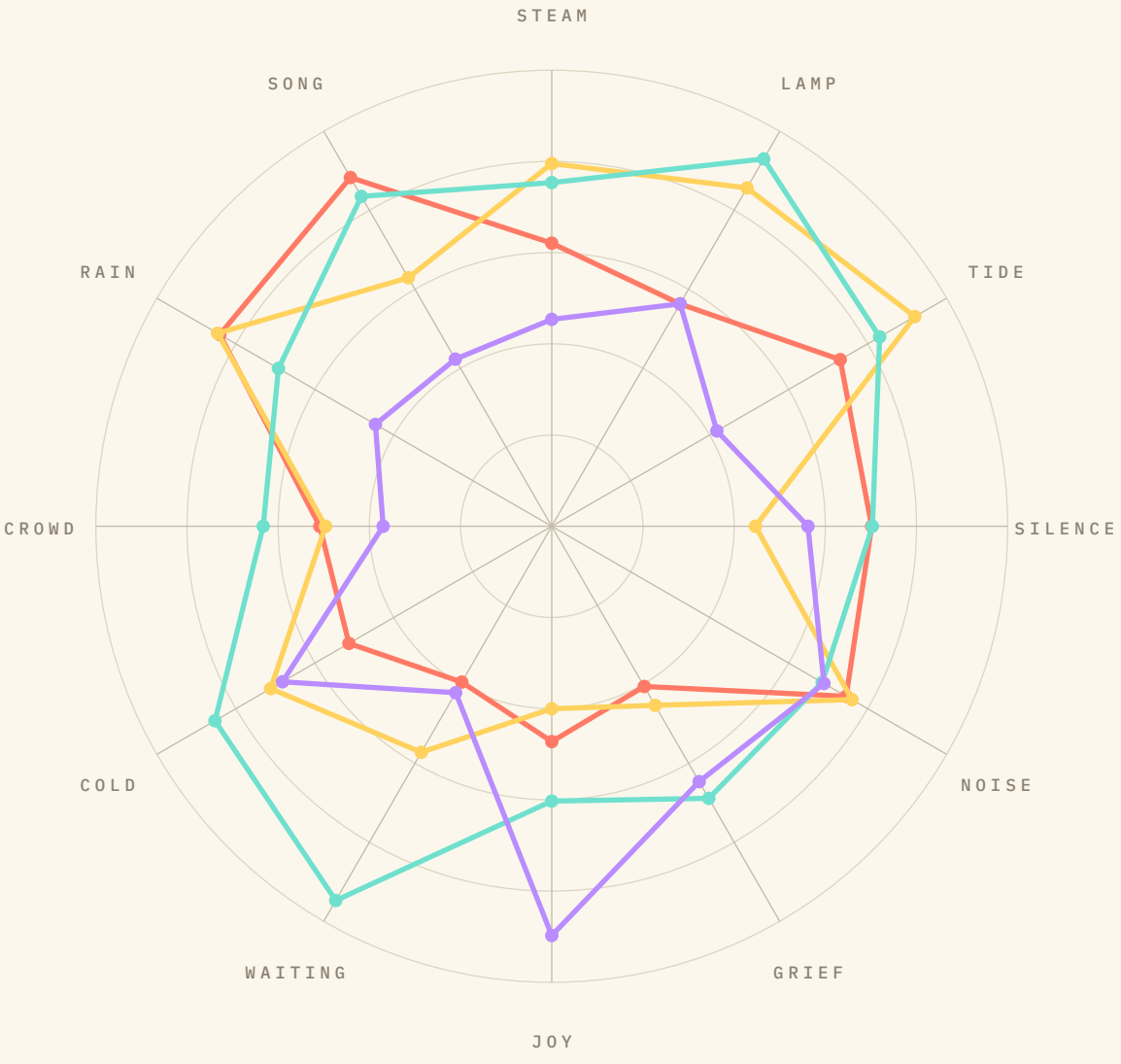


PLATE VIII

The Weather of the Conversation

one year, measured hourly, with no instrument

The Botany of Carried Soil

SET DOWN BY IRIS FENN, TWELVE, AND THE DECK ORCHARD

Eleven acres of soil, carried at height, going round an island.
It behaves like nothing on the ground and everybody had to learn it.

The Red Shed carries eleven acres of soil on its north deck and three hundred and eighty-one trees, of which eighty-one are apples, all one variety, which nobody can name and which everybody calls the deck apple.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT SOIL THAT WALKS

SALT

The first and worst problem. Spray at eleven hundred feet is not supposed to be a thing and it is a thing, and the first twenty years of the deck orchard were mostly about salt. What worked in the end was hedging on the windward arc, which is unglamorous, and which took four attempts.

LIGHT

A tree on a walking deck receives light from a direction that changes several times a year, because the city turns. The apples do not seem to mind. The pears minded enormously and there are no longer any pears.

WIND

Constant, and always from the same relative direction while walking, which produces a lean. All eighty-one apples lean the same way. From the Queens shore with binoculars you can see the whole orchard leaning and it looks like a crowd listening to somebody.

BEES

Yes. Nine hives. They orient on the city and not on the ground, which we are told should not work and which has worked for thirty years, and when the city walks the bees walk with it and do not appear to notice. A beekeeper from upstate came to look at this and stayed four days and went away quiet.

GRAVES

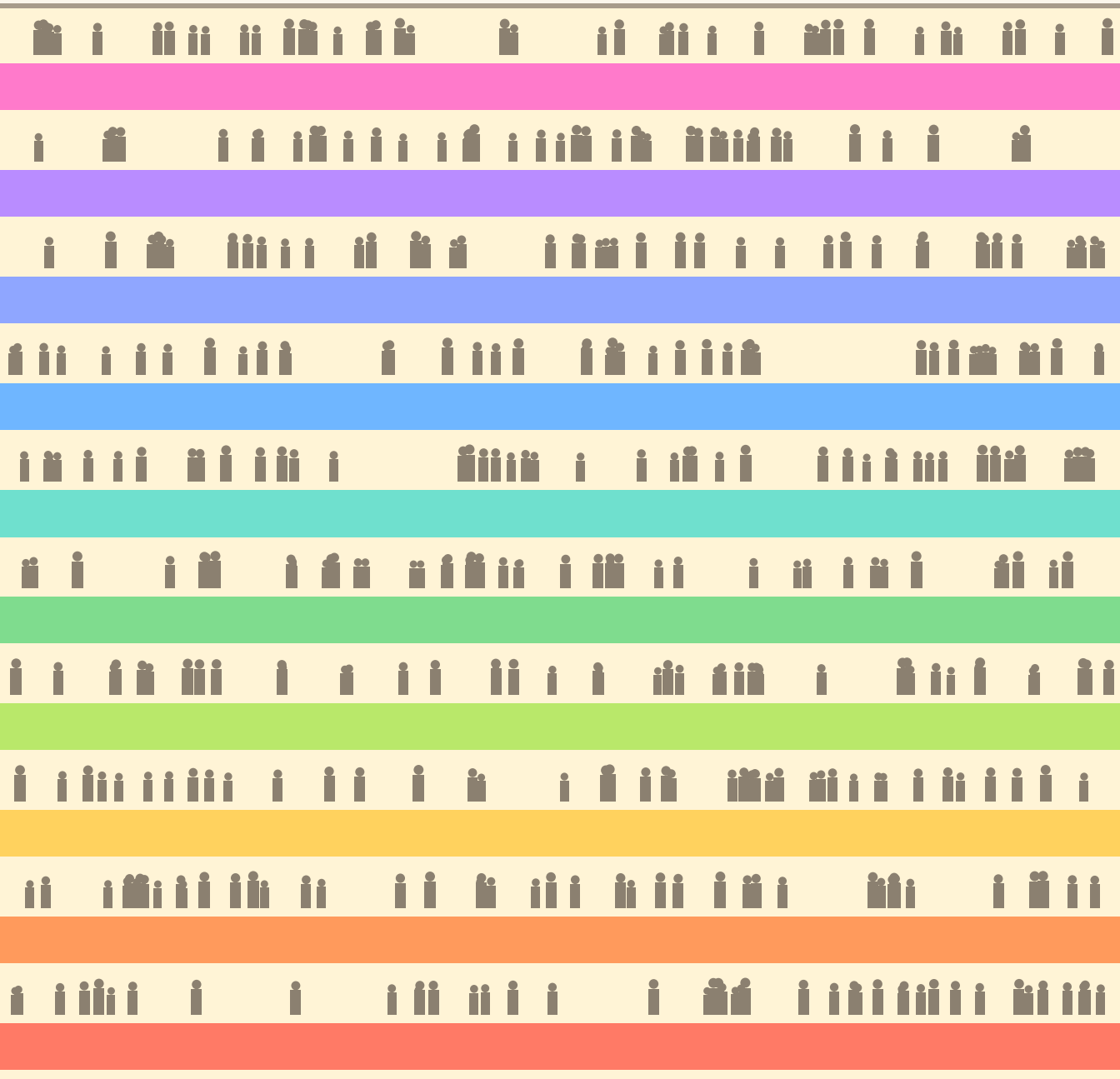
The deck orchard is also the burial ground of SWC-01. This is not a secret and it is not signposted. Ashes go into the soil under the apples and there are no markers and no register, by a decision taken forty years ago that has never been revisited.

THE DECK APPLE

It is small, green going yellow, and sharp, and it does not keep. It is not a good apple. Everybody who is given one by a stranger on the north deck says it is the best apple they have ever eaten, which is a finding about people and not about apples, and which we have recorded anyway because this is a science.

You cannot buy one. There is no arrangement by which you could. They are handed to whoever is standing there in the three weeks when they are ready, and in a bad year there are not enough and in a good year they are given to the ferries.

A THOUSAND CHILDREN ON THE DECK · ONE MARK EACH



COUNTED TWICE, ONCE GOING UP AND ONCE COMING DOWN, AND THE SECOND COUNT WAS HIGHER

PLATE XIX

A Thousand Children on the Deck

counted twice; the second count was higher

The Acoustics of Very Large Objects

SET DOWN BY DAMIEN OYELARAN, SIXTEEN, THE BATTERY

Everything on this shoreline arrives twice.
Once through the air and once off the far shore.

The four cities are the largest sound-making objects in this harbour and almost none of the sound they make is designed.

THE BELL

Below the range most people call a note. Thirty-one feet across the mouth. Felt in the sternum before it is heard. At the Battery it arrives twice, four seconds apart, because of Brooklyn.

THE COLLAR

Twelve bearings and a pin, turning. A held note, very quiet, continuous, at about the pitch of a fridge. You can only hear it with a hand on the housing. Children are allowed to touch the pin and this is how most people on this island first hear a machine.

THE PAD

The largest sound in the harbour and the one nobody notices, because it is a very slow sound. A pad the size of a basketball court entering water at a foot a minute makes a noise for eleven minutes that is entirely below what you can hear and that gulls will not fly through.

THE LUNG

The stacks. Steam under pressure through shaped apertures. This is the one thing on a walking city that was tuned on purpose: the aperture profiles were changed in the ninth year specifically because the original ones whistled and the crews could not sleep.

THE STAIR

Nine thousand people a week on thirty-four flights of open steel. From the West Harlem seawall this is a continuous sound like rain on a roof, and it goes up and down in the evening as the crowd goes up and down, and people who live there can tell the time by it.

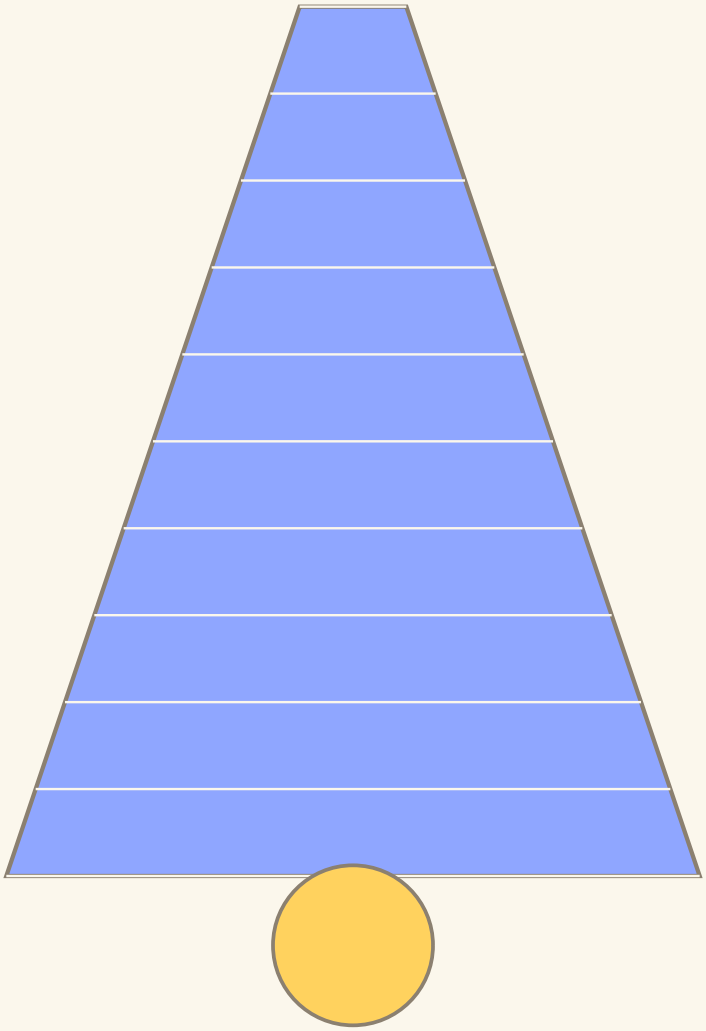
THE DECK, AT NIGHT

Nothing. This is the finding that surprised us. Eleven thousand people on eleven acres at two in the morning make less noise than one street of the same population, and we have measured it badly with telephones and the difference is not small.

THE FOUR-SECOND RULE

Everything at the Battery arrives twice. You learn to count to four without knowing you are doing it, and everybody from this end of the island does it, and you can identify us by it at parties.

The consequence is that no sound here is ever finished when it stops. There is always the second one still on its way in from Brooklyn, and if you speak into the gap you are speaking over the return, and everybody knows not to, and nobody was taught.



IT IS NOT AN ALARM. NOTHING ON A WALKING CITY IS AN ALARM.

PLATE XV

The Bell, in Section

rung only when another city is in sight

Applied Stubbornness

SET DOWN BY NOOR ALVAREZ-KIM, ELEVEN, GANSEVOORT

There is no phrase for no.
This is the most studied fact in the harbour
and the explanations are all worse than the fact.

Twelve phrases. One is yes. Two is not yet. There is nothing for no, there is nothing for danger, and there is nothing for help.

Visiting linguists write papers about this. My grandmother's view is that no is not a difficult thing to say and you do not need a searchlight for it.

THE GANSEVOORT EXCHANGE

The Cradle left a pavilion at Pier Seventy-Six four years ago and did not come back for it, which is allowed, except that one of the nine pools was cracked and the ninth would not hold the cold.

For six days nothing. On the seventh evening the Red Shed put its lamp on and said come over, which it almost never does first.

Come over.
Not yet.
Come over.
Not yet.
Come over.
Not yet.
Come over.
Not yet.

Come over.
Not yet.
Come over.
Yes.

Five hours. Eleven askings. My grandmother sat down on the bollard and said, in the voice she uses for weather and politics, that this was going to take all night and that we should all be glad we lived long enough to see somebody be that stubborn about being kind.

Then the Red Shed picked up its back leg and turned, which takes a very long time, and went north at three hundred feet an hour with its lamp on the whole way. Two days. It stood beside the Cradle and put a bridge across and the crews went over and fixed the ninth pool.

THE LAW OF APPLIED STUBBORNNESS

Not yet is not no. That is the whole discipline. It is the difference between a conversation that ends and one that is having a hard week.

A language without no requires everybody in it to keep asking, and requires everybody in it to be able to say not yet as many times as they need to without being called unkind, and the two of those together make a very slow and extremely durable kind of agreement.

Nobody designed this. There was a meeting about the code in the eleventh year and the meeting ran out of time before it got to no, and then thirty years went by.

THE WORD SWC-03 LEARNED IN ITS FOURTH YEAR

AGAIN

AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN

IT WAS SAID BY A CHILD AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIR AND REPEATED BY ELEVEN THOUSAND PEOPLE

PLATE XIII

The Word SWC-03 Learned

said once by a child and repeated by eleven thousand people

The Geometry of Bridges

SET DOWN BY THE HELL GATE BRIDGE CREW, BY DICTATION

A bridge between two decks is the only channel that carries people.
It is therefore the only one anybody argues about.

We were asked to explain how a bridge is run between two walking cities and we have agreed to do it in plain terms on condition that nobody uses this to try it.

ONE · THE STANDOFF

Two cities must be between four hundred and eleven hundred feet apart, and both must have all pads set, and neither may lift a leg while a bridge is up. That last is absolute and there is no procedure for breaking it.

TWO · THE LEVELS

The decks are never at the same height and are not made to be. The bridge is run between whatever two levels are closest and the difference is taken up in the ramp. The steepest ever run was one in nine, between the Long Stair at flight four and the Red Shed north deck, and people complained for a week and used it anyway.

THREE · THE LINE

A messenger line goes over first, by rocket. Then a hauling line. Then the walkway itself in eleven sections, which are winched across and pinned. Nine hours in good weather. The record is six and it was set by showing off and the crew involved were spoken to.

FOUR · THE SAG

Everything sags. The design allows four feet at midspan with four hundred people

on it and the design is not being optimistic. It moves when you walk on it. It is supposed to. Every year somebody writes to the Harbour Office about this.

FIVE · WHO MAY CROSS

Anybody. That is the argument and it has been the argument for forty years. There is no ticket, no queue system, no manifest, and no counting. It has been proposed nine times that there be counting.

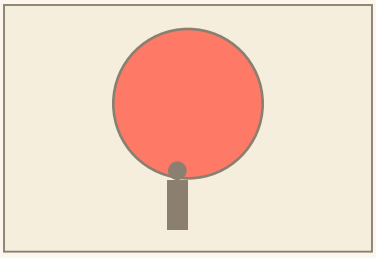
SIX · WHY THERE IS NO COUNTING

Because on the third day at Hell Gate there was a queue eleven hundred people long on the Long Stair and it moved all night, and if there had been a manifest there would have been a limit, and if there had been a limit somebody would have been at the end of it.

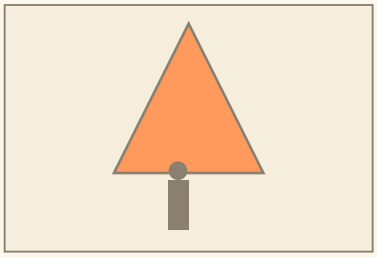
THE THING WE WILL SAY FOR OURSELVES

People think the bridge is the romantic part. It is not. The bridge is nine hours of cold work and a great deal of swearing and a hydraulic pin that jams in the same place every time.

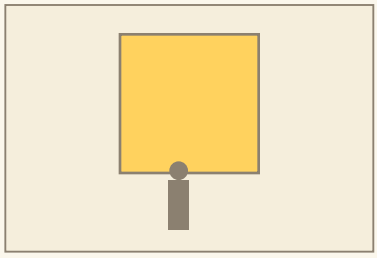
The romantic part is that at the end of it two cities are one deck and nobody is in charge of who goes across, and we have never once been given an instruction about it, in forty years, from anybody.



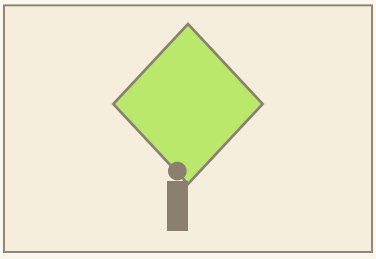
THE WATER CARRIER



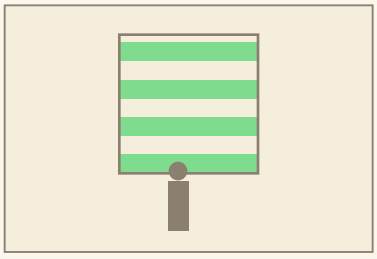
THE ONE WHO COUNTS



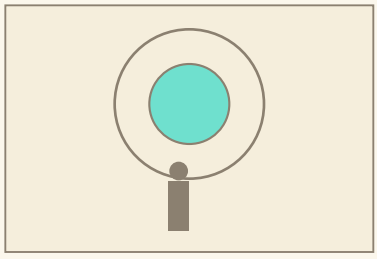
THE LAMP KEEPER



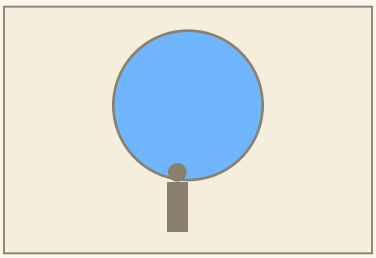
THE WIDOW OF THE PIER



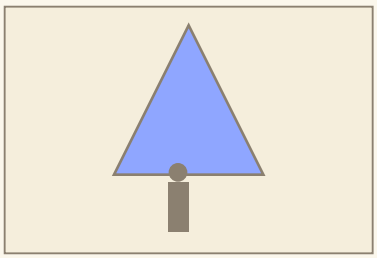
THE CHILD WITH THE FLAG



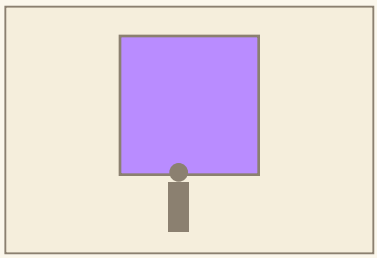
THE PAINTER OF ROOFS



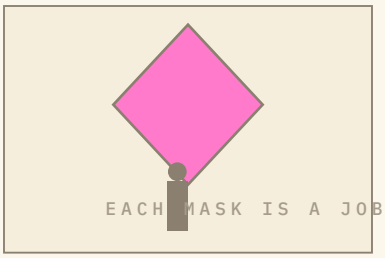
THE BELL RINGER



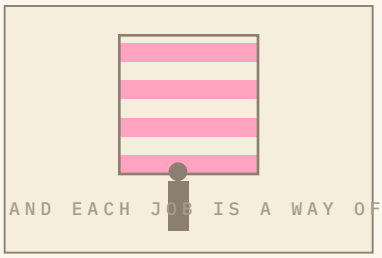
THE SLEEPER



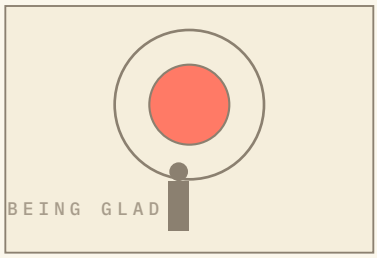
THE ONE WHO REFUSES



THE VISITOR



THE MOURNER



THE ONE WHO LAUGHS

EACH MASK IS A JOB AND EACH JOB IS A WAY OF BEING GLAD

PLATE XII

A Parade of Masks

twelve citizens of the deck, after Hejduk

The Chemistry of Paint at Eleven Acres

SET DOWN BY THE CROWN CREW OF SWC-03

A band is a statement.
It is also four thousand gallons and a week you will not get back.

The crown of a walking city is its painted roof, and the painted roof is channel three of five, and it is the only channel that can be read from the ground by somebody who knows nothing.

THE PRACTICAL FACTS

AREA

Eleven acres on SWC-01, nine on SWC-03, fourteen on SWC-02 including the crossbar, twelve on SWC-04.

MATERIAL

A silicate on a lime base, mixed on the deck. It does not come in tins. It cannot be bought. Four people on each city know the proportions and there is no document, which the Harbour Office has objected to in writing three times.

THE PROHIBITION

No black and no dark colour. This is not our rule, it came with the cities, and we have kept it for forty years without exception. The darkest tone permitted on any crown is a warm taupe. Everything else goes up.

TIME

A full repaint is seven days with a crew of sixty. It has been done in one and a half. It has been done in one and a half twice.

WEATHER

You cannot paint below forty degrees and you cannot paint in rain and you cannot paint at anchor in a cross-wind because the spray carries. The window in November is about four days.

THE TWO FAST REPAINTS

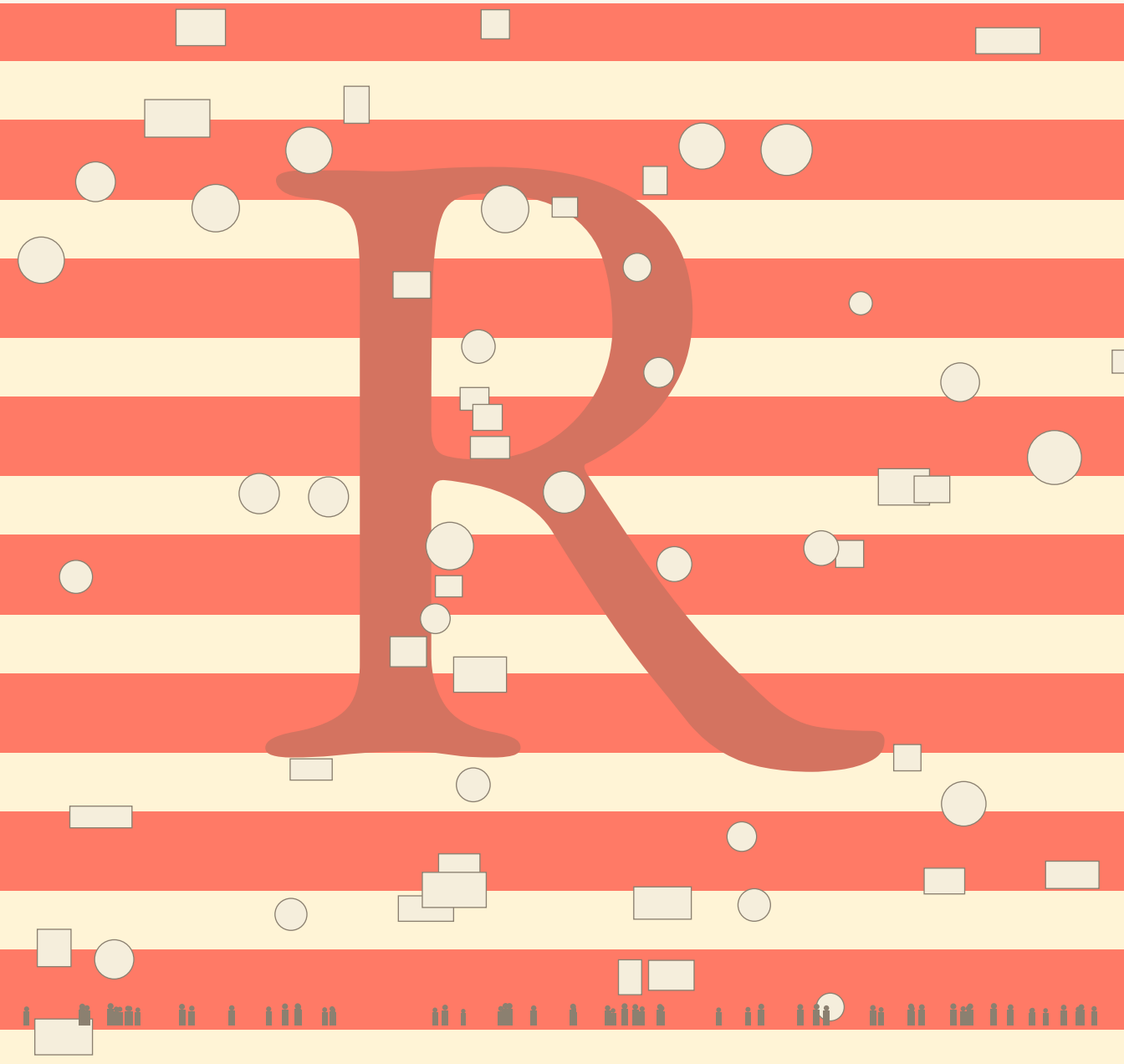
The first was at Hell Gate on the seventh day of the colloquy, when all three cities repainted in one day, thirty-three acres, without coordinating the colours in advance. Everybody assumes we coordinated. We have all separately denied it and we will go on denying it.

The second we are going to describe once and then not again.

Two springs ago a man on this crew died after a long illness. He had worked the clay sheds for six years. He painted everything lime — his door is lime, he argued with his wife about the door for eleven years — and we went amber to lime in a day and a half.

People write about this as though the city did it. The city did not do it. Sixty people did it and we knew exactly what we were doing and we did it because his daughter is nine and lives on the Astoria shore and looks up.

She has written elsewhere in this book that she is nine and not stupid and that she knows the difference. We would like it recorded that we cried on the crown and finished the job.



THE R IS NOT A NAME. IT IS A SENTENCE THAT MEANS: THIS IS THE ONE THAT CARRIES A ROOM.

PLATE VII

The Roof of SWC-01, Painted

eleven acres of a single letter

The Economics of Nothing

SET DOWN BY MR. CORTEZ'S CLASS, P.S. 71

Eleven thousand people. No rent.
We spent a term trying to work out why this does not collapse.
We did not manage it and we are printing our failure.

Nobody pays rent on a walking city. This is the fact that visitors cannot get past and it took our class a whole term to get past it too.

WHAT WE ESTABLISHED

ONE

There are 1,904 doors on SWC-01 and 61 locks, and 40 of the locks are on the pump room. This is a count done by five children with clipboards and it is the best count that exists.

TWO

There are about 3,000 places you can sit without paying and 9 places where you must pay, all in the same workshop, and the payment is not money and we could not get a clear answer about what it is.

THREE

The distinction between a bed and a place where somebody sleeps does not exist aboard, which broke our census, and once you accept it the number of beds is every horizontal surface.

FOUR

The deck apple cannot be bought. There is no mechanism by which it could be. In a good year the surplus goes to the ferries.

FIVE

The shelf in the carried house holds a wedding ring that anybody could take and that nobody has taken in forty years.

WHERE WE FAILED

We could not build a model. We tried three.

The first assumed reputation: people behave because everybody knows everybody. It fails at eleven thousand, which is a town, not a village, and it fails harder at Hell Gate where forty thousand strangers crossed bridges in a week and nothing happened.

The second assumed enforcement we had not found. We went looking for it for four weeks. There are no police aboard. There is a harbourmaster and a safety crew and a person who will ask you to move. That is all of it.

The third assumed the cities select for people who behave. This is the one we wanted to be true and it is not: anybody may go aboard and there is no application and nobody is turned away.

WHAT OUR TEACHER SAID

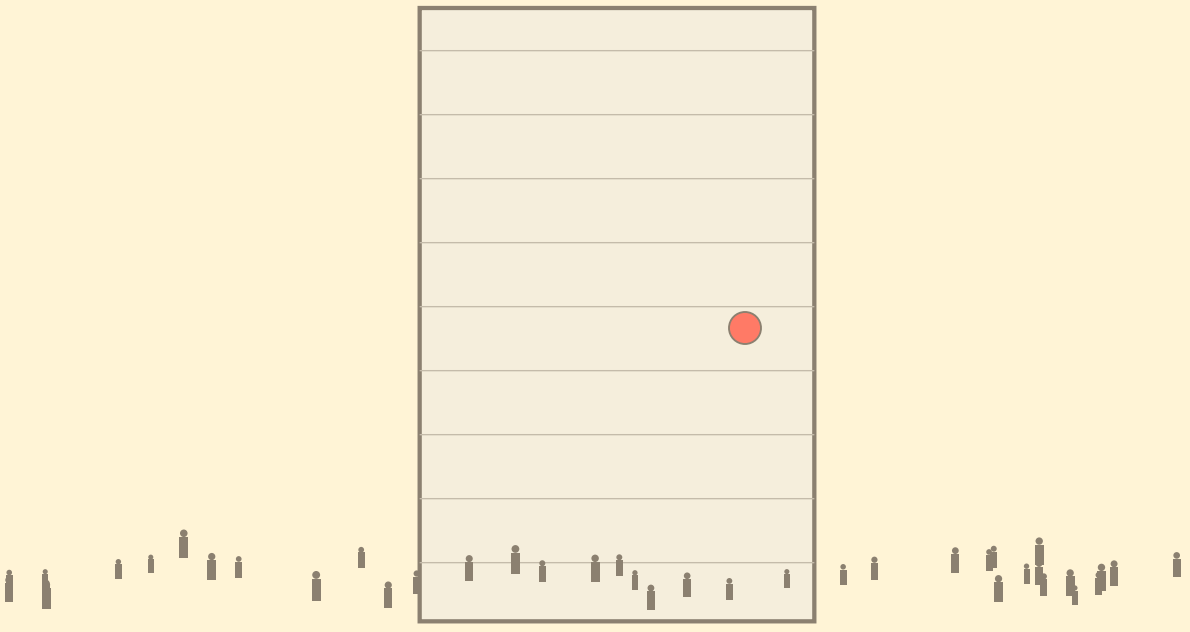
Mr. Cortez let us fail for a term and then said one thing on the last day, which is that we had spent eleven weeks asking why people do not take things and had never once asked what they would take them for.

He said: on the deck there is nowhere to put a thing that is yours alone. There is no room that locks. A stolen object aboard a walking city has to be carried around by you for the rest of your life in front of eleven thousand people who did not lock their doors.

Then he said: that is not an economy, it is an architecture, and you have been in the wrong subject since September.

PLATE OF THE ARGUMENT · THE ONLY DIAGRAM IN THE BOOK WITH NO SCALE

A DOOR THAT IS ALWAYS OPEN



TURNED INSIDE OUT AND MADE PUBLIC

RADICAL JOY

PLATE XI

The Argument

grief turned inside out and made public and architectural

The Grammar of Twelve

SET DOWN BY SAM PTAK, TWELVE, WITH THE HARBOUR OFFICE TABLE

The versions on the internet are wrong in three places
and one of the three is dangerous.

The full table, correctly. Counted flashes, two seconds between phrases, ten between sentences, which nobody keeps to — see the third science.

ONE · YES
Also I am here, I am awake, and I heard that, depending on when it arrives. The most flexible phrase in the language and the one that does the most work, which is true of yes everywhere.

TWO · NOT YET
Not no. See the seventh science.

THREE · COME OVER
The oldest phrase and the first ever sent, and it meant nothing when it was sent.

FOUR · STAY
Do not leave the station yet. Used most in November and February, which the Harbour Office has data on and has never explained.

FIVE · I SEE YOU
Sent when a city comes out of fog or round a bend. Not a greeting. Closer to putting your hand flat on a table.

SIX · THE TIDE

The only purely useful phrase, and therefore the least popular.

SEVEN · I AM SAD

Real, official, in the table since the eleventh year. There was a four-month argument about whether it should be, during which the crews used it continuously.

EIGHT · SO AM I

The reply to seven. Not a comfort, not advice, not there there. My mother is a nurse and says eight is the correct response to seven about ninety per cent of the time and that most people cannot manage it.

NINE · LOOK UP

For weather, for birds, for the light on the bridge in October, and once for a whale.

TEN · AGAIN

The newest phrase. Said first by a boy of seven at the bottom of the Long Stair who wanted to go up it a second time, taken up by four hundred people on thirty-four flights, and sent up the river that evening by a man on the crown who has never been named.

ELEVEN · GOODNIGHT

Always answered. In the entire recorded history of the four cities there is no instance of an eleven that was not answered by an eleven, including on the night of the accident.

TWELVE · I AM STILL HERE

Sent in the morning. Not the same as one. One means I am here. Twelve means I was here all night and I did not go anywhere and it is morning now and I am still here.

THE THREE CORRECTIONS

First: there are not more phrases and the invented ones on the internet are invented. There is no danger and no help. If a city needs help it says come over, which is the oldest phrase there is, and everybody comes.

Second: the long single is not a phrase and will not be put in the table.

Third, and this is the dangerous one: the code is not secret and is not technical and does not belong to the crews. It is on the back of every school card. Anybody with a torch can say any of the twelve things to a fifteen-hundred-foot machine and it will answer, and there is no rule about it and there never has been.

TWELVE STATIONS, TWELVE COLOURS

THE LETTER ON THE RIGHT IS WHO WAS STANDING THERE WHEN WE COUNTED

PLATE X

Twelve Stations, Twelve Colours

the shoreline as a list, which is how children hold it

The Science of Being Left

SET DOWN BY THE CRADLE CREW, SWC-04

Eleven pavilions. Two aboard. Nine given away.
On the crew list they are not filed under equipment.

We build them, we carry them, we set them down, and we do not always come back. That is the job and it is the part of the job that nobody asks about until they have watched it happen.

THE THREE OUTCOMES

ADOPTED

The usual one. The nearest neighbourhood begins using it, then maintaining it, then arguing about it, and once people are arguing about a thing it is theirs. Pier Seventy-Six, nine years, a committee, factions, and a step nobody asked us to build.

LEFT ALONE

Twice. Mill Rock and the Inwood shoal. The pumps stop, the pools become one pool at harbour level, and it fills with birds and oysters. Both times the Harbour Office proposed removal and both times there was a five-hour meeting and both are still there.

SUNK ON PURPOSE

Once. Pavilion One, at Corlears Hook, in eleven feet of water, with four hundred people and three songs going at once because nobody had agreed what to sing.

THE CREW LIST

On our list the pavilions are not under EQUIPMENT. They are under COMPANY. This began as a joke about forty years ago and stopped being one, the way most true things do.

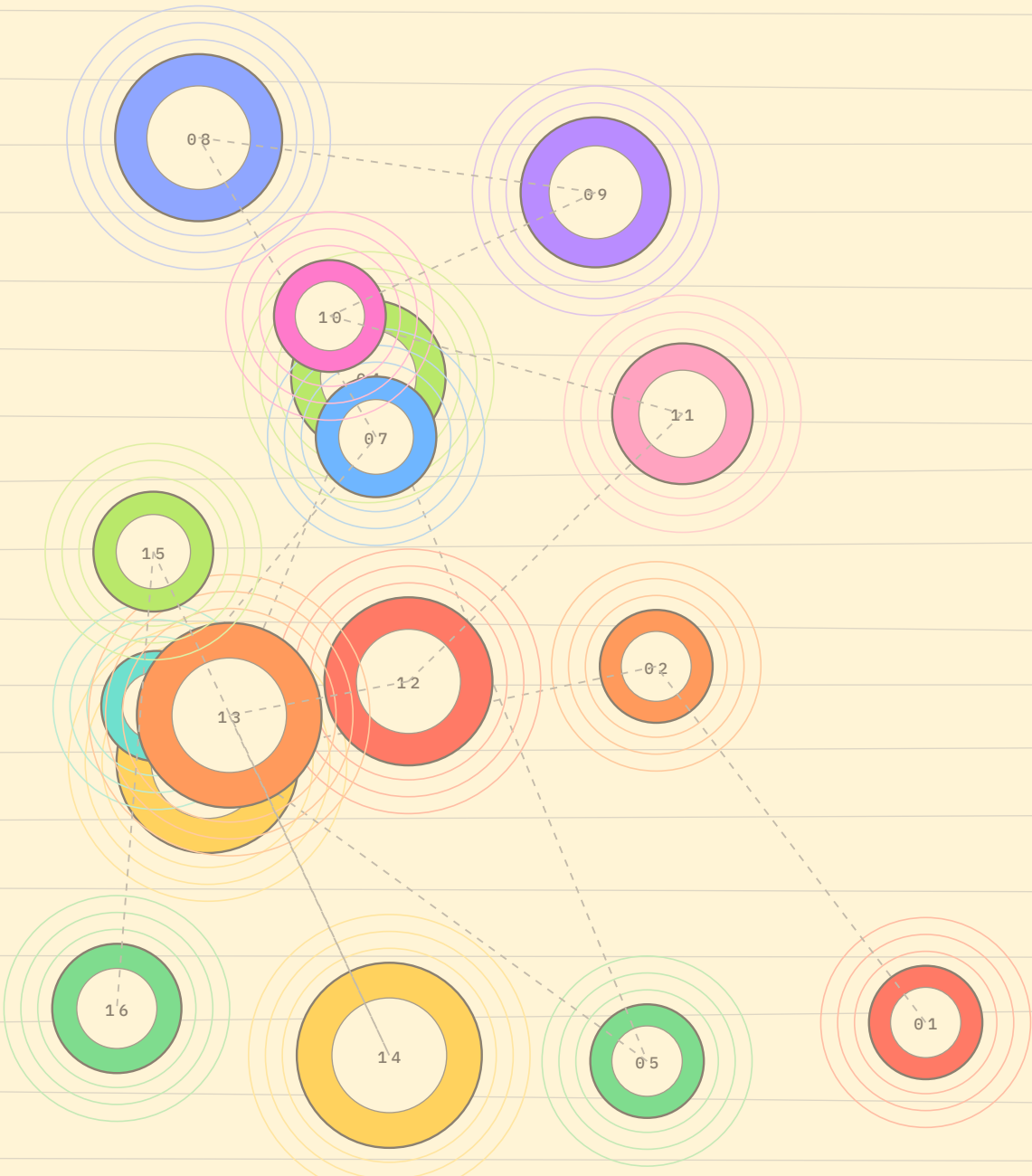
When we set one down and walk away, the crew stand at the stern rail and watch it until it is out of sight. All of us. Every time. Nobody organised this and nobody could stop it now.

WHAT WE SAY TO THE ONES WHO ASK

A twelve-year-old at Inwood asked one of us whether it was hard and got yes, and asked whether it got easier and got no, and asked why we keep doing it.

The answer she was given, which we have all agreed is the right one: we are not leaving it. We are putting it somewhere it can be loved by people who are not us.

Eleven built.
Two aboard.
Nine given away.
Not one of them lost.



EACH ONE FILLS WITH WATER AND THEN WITH OYSTERS, IN THAT ORDER

PLATE XIV

Footprints in the Harbour Mud

sixteen pads; each fills with water and then with oysters

III

PART

The Eighteen Days

a chronicle of three cities standing in the worst water in this harbour, of which two days are famous and sixteen are not, and the sixteen are the point

The Arithmetic Nobody Wanted to Do

SPOKEN BY CAPTAIN ROSE BAPTISTE, PILOT, WHITEHALL

I spent six weeks telling this harbour it could not be done.
I was right about the water and wrong about everything else,
which my son informs me is the story of my life.

You cannot understand the eighteen days without understanding what a leg is.

A walking city stands on pads. While a leg is down the city is a building. While a leg is up — and that is twelve minutes, per leg, per step, and it cannot be hurried, because the collar turns at the speed the collar turns — the city is standing on what is left, and the current is pushing on fifteen hundred feet of vertical surface.

SWC-03 has four legs and stands in Hell Gate as a matter of routine, which pilots describe with a word this book has asked me not to print.

SWC-02 has two.

THE SIX WEEKS

When it became clear in the spring that all three intended to be at Hell Gate on the same tide, every pilot on this harbour said the same thing, and I said it loudest, and I said it at four public meetings.

A two-legged city with a leg up in a four-and-a-half-knot cross-set is a two-thousand-ton lever with one hinge. The Letter A could stand at Hell Gate. The Letter A could not arrive at Hell Gate. Standing and arriving are different problems and only one of them is engineering.

THE MEETING

At the fourth meeting a structural engineer from the Letter A crew, a woman of about fifty with a folder, put our numbers on the wall and agreed with every one of them.

She said: at peak flood we cannot lift a leg here.

She said it four times, and each time somebody asked a question she said it again, and eventually a pilot I have known thirty years lost patience and said, then it cannot be done.

And she said: at peak flood.

And the room went completely silent, because every person in it worked it out at the same moment.

SLACK WATER

Between the flood and the ebb the current does not slow. It stops, and then it turns and runs the other way. At Hell Gate that stop lasts between eleven and nineteen minutes depending on the moon, the wind, and what the Sound has been doing all week.

A leg takes twelve.

So it is possible. Once per tide. For one leg. If the leg begins moving in the correct minute, and if slack runs long, and if nothing goes wrong.

The Letter A needed four legs moved. Two legs, two steps each. Four slack waters. Two days.

I went home that night and did the arithmetic again at my own kitchen table, hoping to find the mistake, and there was no mistake, and I sat there until about three in the morning being furious about something that had not happened yet.

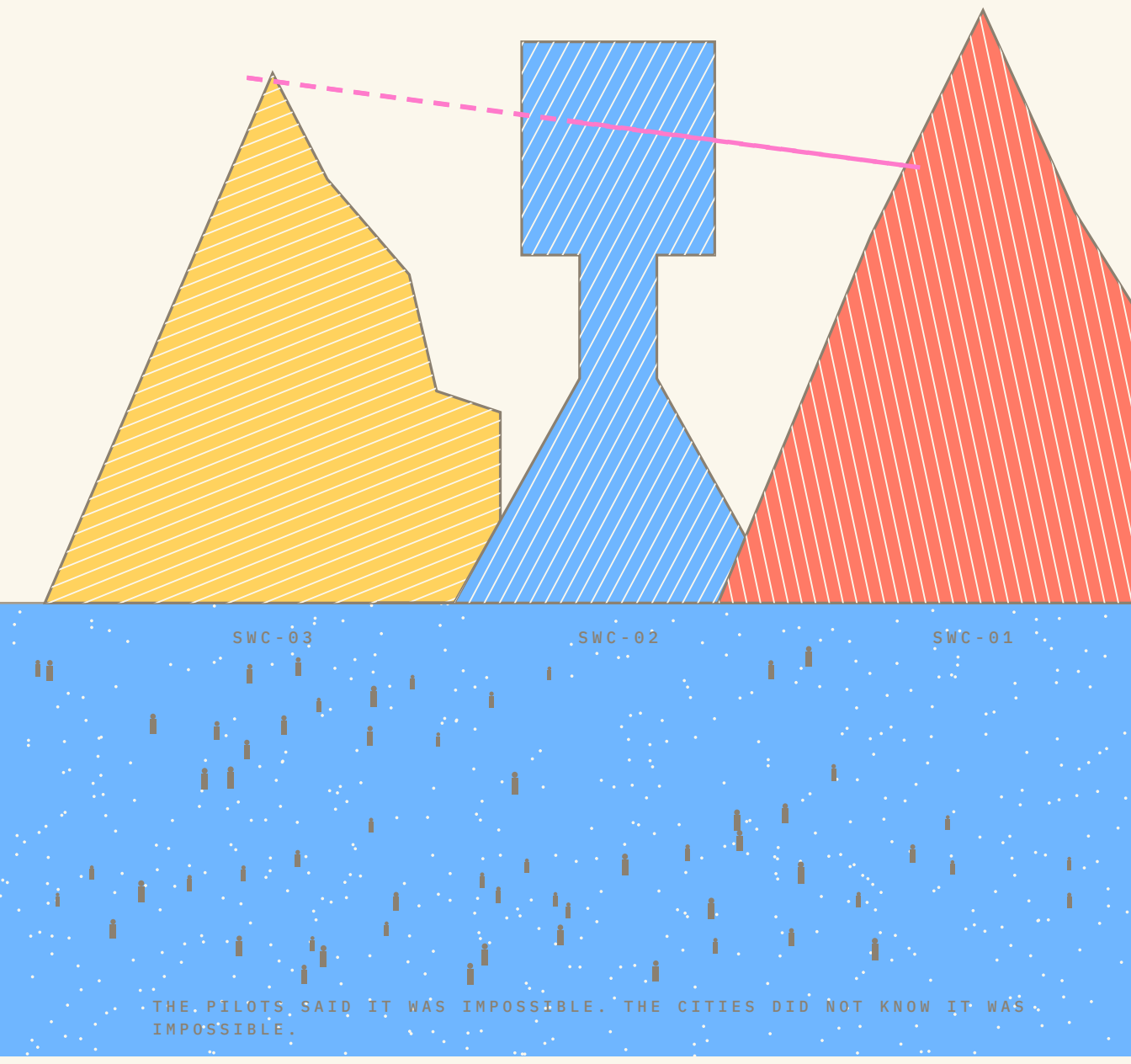


PLATE XVIII

The Colloquy at Hell Gate

three cities standing in a four-knot current on the same tide

Four Slack Waters

SPOKEN BY TEODORO BAPTISTE, FOURTEEN, ON THE LAUNCH

Four hundred boats is the official number and it is low.
Everything that floated in this harbour was at Hell Gate that week.

The Red Shed had come up on the Sunday and had no trouble at all, because three legs is not the problem, and it spent the whole of the two days standing quietly to the north with its lamp off, which everybody agreed was extremely good manners.

The Long Stair was already there and had been for a fortnight.

FIRST SLACK · TUESDAY, 04:41

Dark and cold. The west leg went up at four forty-one and down at four fifty-three and the flood came back on at four fifty-eight. Five minutes of margin. Nobody on any boat cheered, because nobody had expected to be frightened.

SECOND SLACK · TUESDAY, 11:02

Eleven minutes, the shortest of the four. Up at eleven-oh-two, down at eleven-fourteen, and the flood was already running when the pad touched. My father says the whole city leaned about four feet and came back, and that he has never seen anything that size move like that, and that he does not wish to again.

THIRD SLACK · WEDNESDAY, 05:20

This is where it went wrong. The east pad found soft ground and sank eleven feet instead of four and the leg would not lift. They lost the whole slack trying. When the flood came back the Letter A was standing where it had been the night before, one step short, with six hours to wait, and about three hundred boats sitting in the dark not saying anything.

FOURTH SLACK · WEDNESDAY, 17:44

Nineteen minutes. The longest slack of the week, known about for a month, and the entire reason the schedule had been built the way it was. The east leg lifted at five forty-four with the sun going down behind the island and four hundred boats holding station in a river that had stopped moving, and the pad went down at five fifty-six, and it was in position.

And the Long Stair, which had watched all of it for two days without saying one word on any channel, put its whole lamp on. Not flashing. On, steady, straight at the Letter A, for the eight minutes it took the current to come back.

My father had spent six weeks explaining to this harbour that this could not be done. She stood in the wheelhouse of a launch and cried in front of her son and two deckhands, and when I looked around, every boat within a quarter of a mile was blowing its horn, which in that water at that hour is a sound I will have for the rest of my life.

A LETTER IS ONLY A LETTER UNTIL IT IS BIGGER THAN THE BUILDING

PLATE II

An Alphabet for Roofs

twenty-six supergraphics, each one bigger than the surface it is on

The Bridges

SPOKEN BY THE BRIDGE CREW AND BY ADA NWOSU, THIRTEEN

Nine hours a bridge, in cold, with a pin that jams.
And then two cities are one deck and nobody is in charge
of who walks across it.

DAY THREE

The Long Stair ran a bridge to the Red Shed at the fourth flight level. Nine hours. The messenger line went over by rocket at six in the morning and the last pin went in a little before four in the afternoon.

By evening people were crossing. Anybody could cross. There was a queue on the Long Stair that we measured, badly, at about eleven hundred people, and it moved all night, and nobody counted anybody in or out.

DAY FOUR

The Letter A ran a bridge to the Long Stair, which was the hard one, because the level difference was ninety feet and it had to be taken up in a ramp at one in eleven, and because the Letter A's deck moves in wind in a way that the other three do not.

By that evening all three were joined, and you could walk from the north deck of the Red Shed, across, up eleven flights of the Long Stair, across again, and into the reading room in the crossbar of the Letter A, without touching the ground.

About forty thousand people did that in the following week.

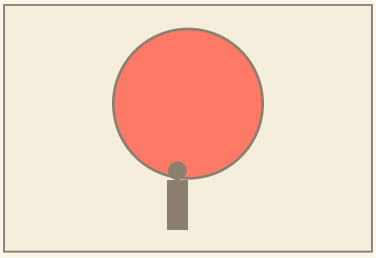
DAY FIVE

ADA NWOSU: I went over on the fifth day with my father, who is an Adder and who complains about everything.

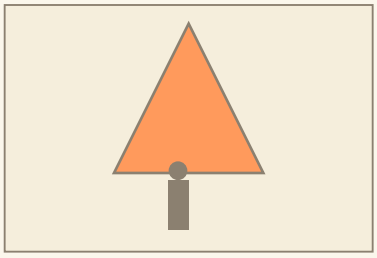
ADA NWOSU: The bridge moves. It is supposed to move. It goes down about four feet in the middle when there are people on it and you feel it and everybody laughs at the same moment, which happens about every ninety seconds all day, so from the shore it must have looked like the bridge was breathing.

ADA NWOSU: In the middle of the span my father stopped, which you are not supposed to do, and looked down at four and a half knots of water going past four hundred feet below, and said: I have lived on this island for fifty-one years and I have never been in the middle of it before.

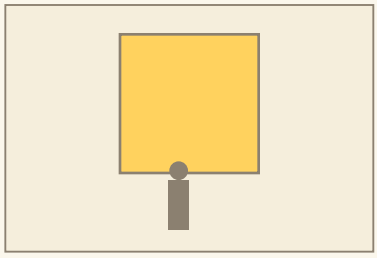
ADA NWOSU: And I said, you are not in the middle of it, you are over the East River. And he said, Ada. Do not be a lawyer about it.



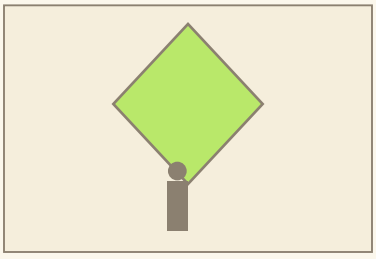
THE WATER CARRIER



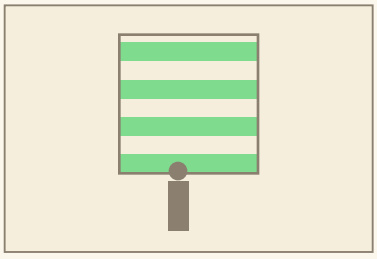
THE ONE WHO COUNTS



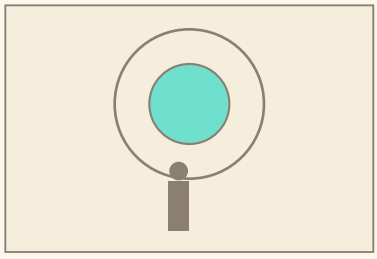
THE LAMP KEEPER



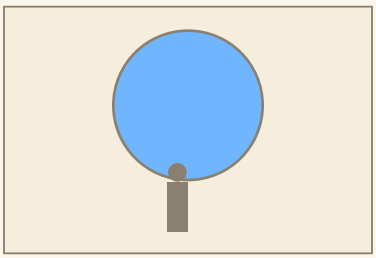
THE WIDOW OF THE PIER



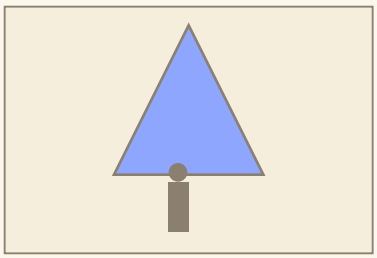
THE CHILD WITH THE FLAG



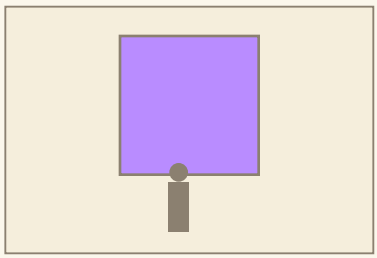
THE PAINTER OF ROOFS



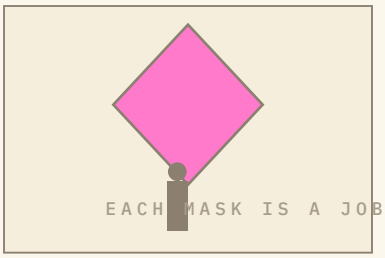
THE BELL RINGER



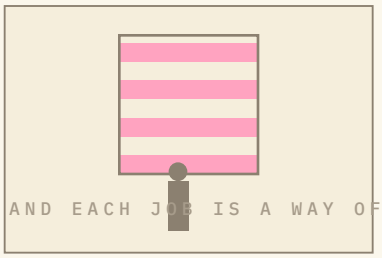
THE SLEEPER



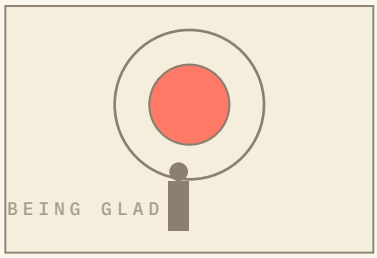
THE ONE WHO REFUSES



THE VISITOR



THE MOURNER



THE ONE WHO LAUGHS

EACH MASK IS A JOB AND EACH JOB IS A WAY OF BEING GLAD

PLATE XII

A Parade of Masks

twelve citizens of the deck, after Hejduk

The Part the News People Missed

SPOKEN BY NOOR ALVAREZ-KIM, TWELVE, WHO LOST A SHOE

Most of the boats went home after the first weekend.
The news went home on the fourth day.
Then it got good.

By the second week there were about two hundred of us left on the Astoria shore and about the same on Randalls, and it had become the strangest and best thing I have ever been part of.

Here is what three cities joined by two bridges in the worst water in this harbour did on days six, seven, eight, and nine.

Nothing.

WHAT NOTHING CONSISTED OF

NO BELLS

Not one, in four days, with all three in plain sight of each other, which is the only condition the law of the bell requires. They could have rung at any moment. They did not.

NO PLUMES

The stacks ran for the lungs and for nothing else. There was steam, but it was not shaped, and if you know how to read it you could tell at a glance that nobody was saying anything.

LAMPS ON THE SLOW SINGLE

One flash every forty seconds, which is what a city does when it is not talking to anybody. All three, all four days, out of step with one another, like three people breathing in the same room.

PEOPLE CROSSING

Continuously, day and night, in both directions, in no particular hurry.

WHAT IT WAS LIKE

I am twelve and I have thought hard about how to say this and I have only got one way.

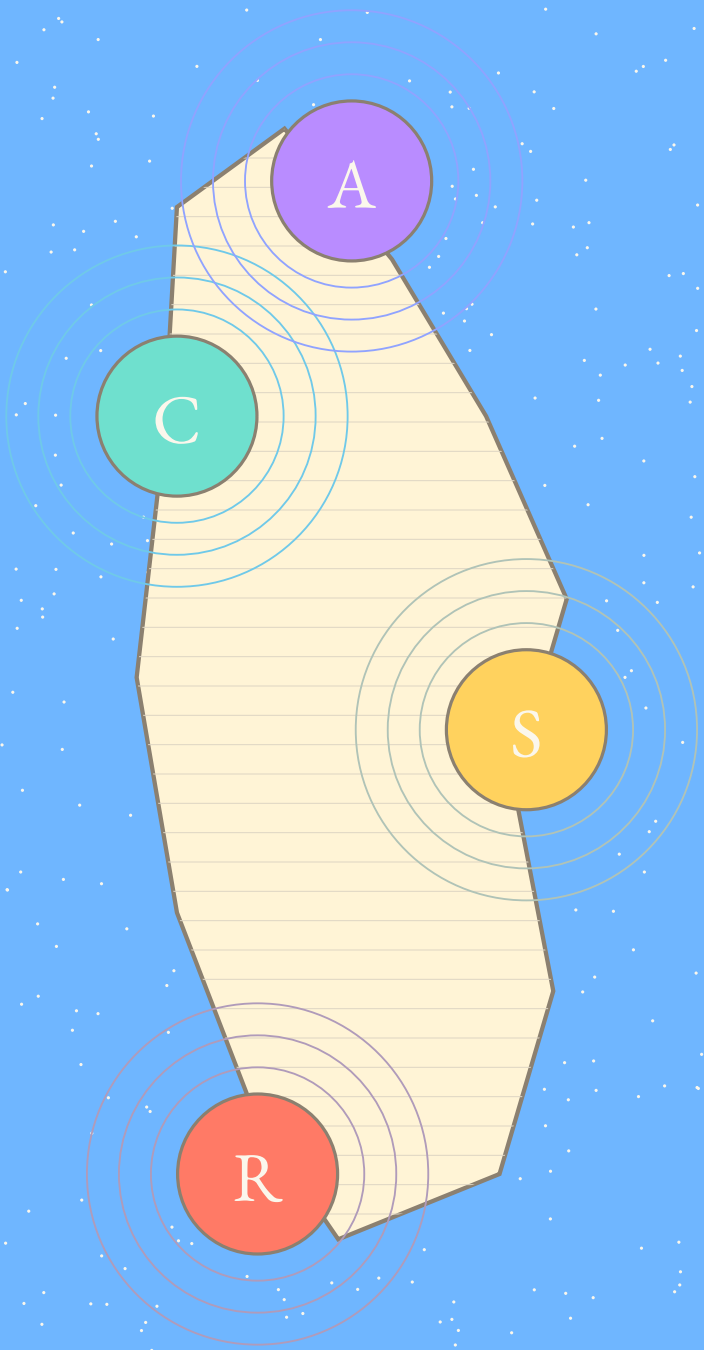
It was like a house on a Sunday afternoon when everybody is home and nobody is talking and you can hear somebody moving about in another room.

That is the whole of days six to nine. Three of the largest objects ever built, standing in a four-knot current at enormous effort and expense, in order to be quiet near each other for four days.

The news people had gone. I have read everything that was written about the eighteen days and almost all of it is about the two days of arriving, and one article calls days six to nine a lull.

It was not a lull. It was the thing. Everything before it was arriving and everything after it was saying goodbye and in the middle there were four days of not needing to do anything, which is what all of that machinery is for.

THE ISLAND WITH FOUR CITIES ASLEEP ON IT



AND IN THE MORNING THEY WILL NOT BE WHERE YOU LEFT THEM

PLATE XX

The Island with Four Cities Asleep on It

and in the morning they will not be where you left them

Thirty-Three Acres

SPOKEN BY THE THREE CROWN CREWS, SEPARATELY

All three repainted in one day.
Everybody assumes the colours were agreed in advance.
All three crews have separately denied it and go on denying it.

A full repaint is seven days with a crew of sixty. On day ten three cities repainted thirty-three acres between first light and dark.

SWC-01, THE RED SHED

Eleven acres. Went to coral. Sixty-one on the crown and about ninety more who came across the bridge from the Long Stair during the morning and were handed rollers and never asked who they were.

SWC-03, THE LONG STAIR

Nine acres. Went to sun. This was the fastest of the three and the crew will tell you it is because nine acres is not eleven, and everybody else will tell you it is because they had done a day-and-a-half repaint once before and knew how.

SWC-02, THE LETTER A

Fourteen acres including the crossbar, which has to be done from below on stages. Went to jade. Finished at twenty past nine at night by worklight, which is against every rule the crown crews have, and there is a photograph of the last stage coming down that hangs in four different rooms on this harbour.

THE QUESTION EVERYBODY ASKS

Coral, sun, jade. Warm, warmer, cool. Three bands that sit together from the top of the Astoria apartment blocks as though somebody had chosen them.

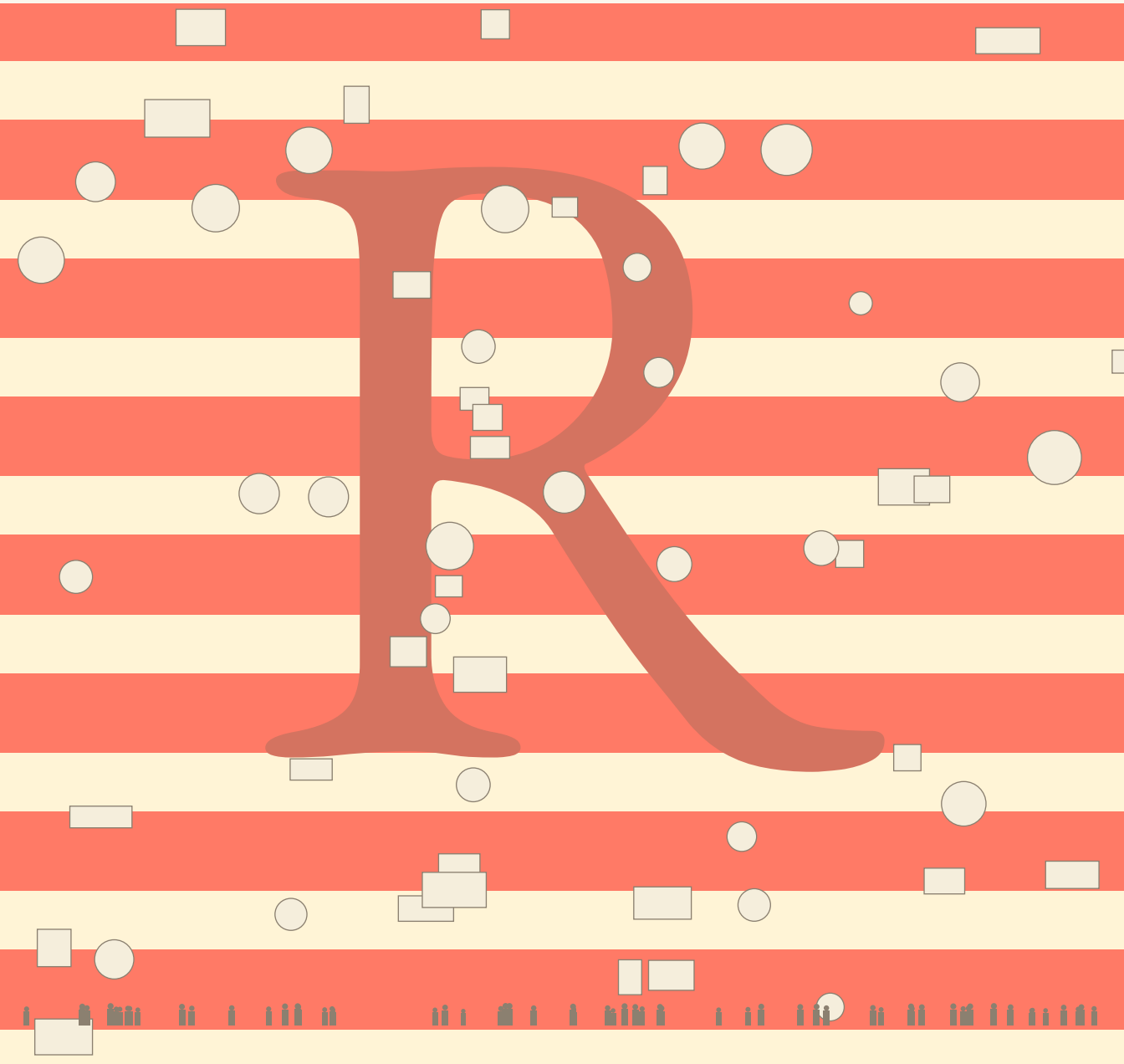
Nobody chose them. There is no channel for choosing them. The band is a channel, but it is a slow one — a band says something once it is finished, and all three of these were finished on the same evening.

The crown crew of SWC-03 has been asked about this at least two hundred times and gives the same answer, which is: we painted what we had. Which is true, and which is also the single most annoying sentence anybody on this harbour has ever said.

THE PROHIBITION

It should be recorded that on day ten, with three crews working in a hurry in bad light with mixed batches on three different cities, not one gallon of dark paint went onto any crown.

Nobody supervised that. There was nobody to supervise it. Forty years and the rule has never been broken, and on the day when it would have been easiest to break it, in a rush, at night, under worklight, it held.



THE R IS NOT A NAME. IT IS A SENTENCE THAT MEANS: THIS IS THE ONE THAT CARRIES A ROOM.

PLATE VII

The Roof of SWC-01, Painted

eleven acres of a single letter

The Singing and the Joke

SPOKEN BY WREN OKONKWO, TEN, AND OTHERS

Somebody started it on the stair.
Nobody knows who and I have asked forty people.

DAYS ELEVEN AND TWELVE

The singing started on the Long Stair, somewhere between flights nine and seventeen, on the morning of the eleventh day.

It went up. That is the thing about a stair with four hundred people on it: a sound moves along it at walking pace and you can hear exactly where it is. It went up thirty-four flights, across the bridge, onto the north deck of the Red Shed, back across the other bridge, up the ramp, and into the reading room in the crossbar of the Letter A.

Where people were reading.

And they put their books down and joined in, which if you know anything about that reading room is the most shocking sentence in this book.

It went on for two days. Not continuously. In patches, starting and stopping, with long gaps, and never the same song twice in a row, and at one point on the twelfth afternoon three songs at once, which everybody who was there mentions and which nobody apologises for.

DAY THIRTEEN

Rain, all day, hard, from the north-east, in the kind of quantity that goes sideways.

Nobody left. Two hundred people on the Astoria shore under whatever they had, which in my case was a bin liner with holes cut in it, which my mother made and which I have kept.

THE JOKE

At about four in the afternoon the Letter A flashed nine. Look up.

And two hundred people on a shore, in horizontal rain, all looked up at once. At nothing. At rain.

And after a moment somebody laughed, and then the whole shore did, and then it flashed nine again.

And we looked up again.

It did it eleven times.

It is the only recorded instance of a Super Walking City making a joke, and the Harbour Office log for that afternoon has eleven entries of phrase nine with no answering traffic, and a note by the duty officer that reads, in full: appears to be deliberate.

Look up.
Look up.
Look up.
Look up.
Look up.
Look up.
Look up.
Look up.
Look up.
Look up.
Look up.

DAYS FOURTEEN AND FIFTEEN

Quiet again. The rain stopped on the fourteenth and everything went back to the slow single flash and people crossing bridges.

On the fifteenth evening the Long Stair changed its band from sun to lime,

alone, in a day, five days after the great repaint, which nobody has ever explained and which the crown crew of SWC-03 will not discuss with anybody, including me, and I asked twice.

THE WORD SWC-03 LEARNED IN ITS FOURTH YEAR

AGAIN

AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN
AGAIN

IT WAS SAID BY A CHILD AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIR AND REPEATED BY ELEVEN THOUSAND PEOPLE

PLATE XIII

The Word SWC-03 Learned

said once by a child and repeated by eleven thousand people

Goodnight, and Again

ASSEMBLED FROM THE HARBOUR OFFICE LOG

The log is a column of numbers with timestamps.
We have replaced the numbers with the words and taken nothing out.

The Harbour Office has logged lamp traffic since the eleventh year. The log is public and almost nobody reads it, because it is a column of numbers.

The eighteen days run to nine hundred and forty lines. We have set out the sixth day, which is the quiet one, and the eighteenth, which is the last. We have added nothing and removed nothing except the entries marked in the original as maintenance.

DAY SIX · EIGHTEEN HOURS · ELEVEN LINES

I am still here.
I am still here.
I am still here.
Yes.
Look up.
Yes.
Yes.
Stay.
Yes.
Yes.
Goodnight.

DAY EIGHTEEN

I am sad.
So am I.
So am I.
I am sad.
So am I.
So am I.
Stay.
Not yet.
Stay.
Not yet.
Stay.
Not yet.
I see you.
I see you.
I see you.
Look up.
Look up.
Look up.
Again.
Again.
Again.
Goodnight.
Goodnight.
Goodnight.

THE BRIDGES CAME DOWN FIRST

Taking a bridge down is six hours and everybody on both shores watched all of it without saying very much.

Then the Red Shed said goodnight to the Long Stair and the Long Stair said it back. Then the Long Stair said it to the Letter A and the Letter A said it back. Then the Letter A said it to the Red Shed and the Red Shed said it back.

Then all three said ten at the same time.

And on the Astoria shore and on the Randalls shore about four hundred people with telephones and torches and one man with the headlights of a van said ten back.

Again.
Again.
Again.
— and from the shore, in bad time, badly aimed,
with the wrong equipment, from people who were cold:
again.

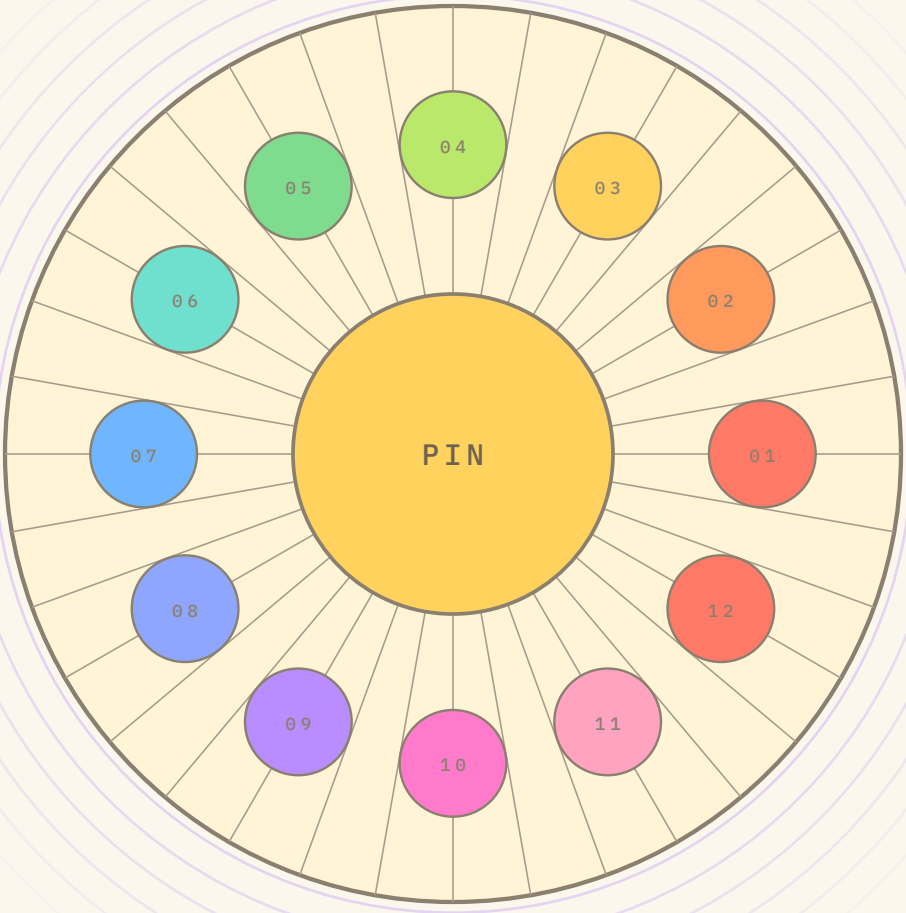
A NOTE ON THE READING

People who read the log for the first time always ask where the rest of it is. Eighteen days, thirty-three acres of paint, forty thousand people across bridges, and the record is I see you, stay, not yet, so am I, again, goodnight.

That is the discussion. There is nothing else to discuss.

If you took every conversation that has ever mattered in the life of any person on this island — the ones at hospital beds and kitchen tables and at two in the morning on a bollard in February — and stripped out the weather and the arrangements and the pretending, you would be left with these twelve phrases, and mostly with six of them.

The cities are not simple. They have stopped saying the parts that do not matter. It took them thirty years and most of us never manage it.



01 THE PIN IS WARM ALL WINTER

02 CHILDREN ARE ALLOWED TO TOUCH IT

03 IT MAKES A SOUND LIKE A HELD NOTE

TWELVE BEARINGS, ONE PIN; THE LEG TURNS IN IT AND THE CITY DOES NOT NOTICE

PLATE V

The Collar Seen from Underneath

twelve bearings, one pin, warm all winter

Stand Still, Look Up

SPOKEN BY NINETEEN PEOPLE ON THE RING DECK AT PIER SEVENTY-S

Everybody got one thing.
Nobody was allowed a second until everybody had had a first.

We wrote this together on the first Sunday, after the meeting, which ran three hours and forty minutes and which was about drainage. There are nineteen of us between eight and eighty.

NOOR
That they will not be where you left them, and that everybody says this as though it were sad, and that it is not.

TEODORO
That the five-forty crossing goes quiet every single time and in eleven thousand crossings has never once not gone quiet.

WREN
That flight thirty-four is painted the same colour as flight one, and that whoever decided that is probably dead.

IRIS
That the Cradle crew stand at the stern rail and watch until it is out of sight, every time, and that nobody organised it.

DAMIEN
That somebody on a crown four miles away rang a bell back at me at one in the morning with no obligation to hear it.

ADA
That the plate says IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE THIS COLD and that both factions voted for it, and that it is the only time.

MRS. ILUNGA
That there are more birds every year, and that this is in a shoebox on index cards, and that the meeting was not close.

MR. ADEYEMI
That glad and grateful are different and you ought to know which one you are.

JUNIPER
That nobody knows where the quiet rule at Mill Rock came from and that everybody keeps it, including people who are angry.

MRS. VANCE
That it is the least sad thing I do.

DELLA
That the first thing ever said with a lamp meant nothing, and somebody answered anyway.

SAM
That there is no phrase for no.

MS. OKWUOSA
That it is the only one of the eleven that will still be exactly where I left it.

THEO
That we would like fewer visitors, and that you have all been very polite about being told so.

BO
That again means: that happened, it was good, it is over, do it again anyway. And that you should tell somebody you cried.

HECTOR
That she shouted, and then she laughed for about a minute.

CAPTAIN BAPTISTE
That I was right about the water.

MR. CORTEZ
That thirty children in a room worked out that it was an architecture and not an economy, and that I have taught for twenty-two years and it was the best afternoon I have had.

THE WEATHER CLUB
That grief does not dip in August. That they are not on a see-saw.

THE LAST THING

At about six the meeting was over and the sun was coming up the river and the Cradle was standing off the pier where it had been all night.

And somebody — and we have argued about who and we are not going to settle it — held up a telephone and flashed it twelve times at a fifteen-hundred-foot machine in the North River.

I am still here.

And nineteen people on a ring deck with cold coffee, aged eight to eighty, watched a lamp eleven hundred feet up come on and say it back.

I am still here.
I am still here.
Again.

THE FOUR ASLEEP AT THE BATTERY · ONE SCALE

NOBODY HAD TO BE TOLD TO COME DOWN AND LOOK

SWC-02 THE LETTER A 1610 FT
SWC-04 THE CRADLE 1490 FT
SWC-03 THE LONG STAIR 1380 FT
SWC-01 THE RED SHED 1240 FT

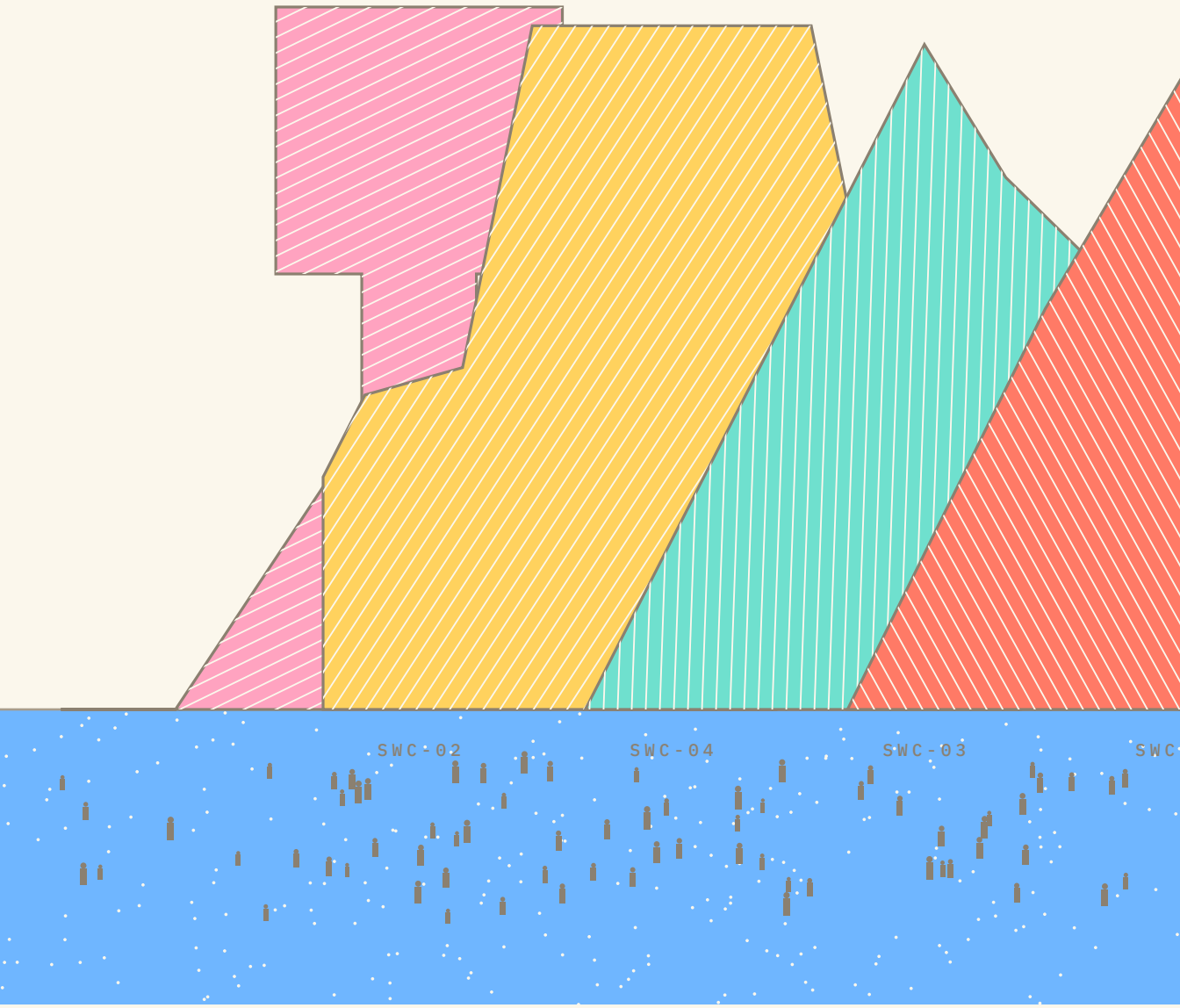


PLATE I

The Four Asleep at the Battery

four cities at one scale, low water, an ordinary Tuesday

Afterword

BY SURJAN

In which the author, permitted to speak again,
records what the middle of his own book did to him.

I was voted out of the middle of this book in October and I got it back for four pages in July, and in between I read two hundred thousand words of testimony from people who have never drawn anything.

Four things happened to me in that time and I am going to set them down in order of increasing damage.

ONE. THE MASQUE WAS ALREADY THERE

I proposed the form thinking I was importing it. Hejduk, the masques, the water carrier and the lamp keeper, the character who is also a structure — I arrived at Pier Seventy-Six with all of that in a folder, prepared to explain it.

The shoreline had twelve of them running already. An object, a person nobody appointed, and a rite that is done and not explained. Twelve stations, twelve masks, sitting there for forty years while I was at graduate school learning the vocabulary for what they were.

This is not humbling in the way that flatters an author. It is properly annoying and I have not finished being annoyed about it.

TWO. THE SCIENCES ARE NOT CHARMING

I fought Part Two for a month because I thought twelve invented disciplines practised by children with clipboards would read as whimsy, and whimsy is the thing

I most fear in my own work.

Then I read the Weather Club's finding that grief does not dip in August. Six years, four hundred and ten thousand cards, two hundred and six people at the edge of an island writing down twelve numbers an hour with no instrument and no definition of any of the terms. And what came out of it is a result: joy and grief are not on a see-saw, they run independently, and the highest joy reading in the entire record is in the cold and the dark of November.

I have been saying a version of that sentence in lecture theatres for nine years with no evidence whatsoever. They have the evidence. They collected it in the rain.

THREE. THE STEP AT PIER SEVENTY-SIX

There is a step going down into the ninth pool with a rail on the left and a lamp above it and a plate that says IT IS SUPPOSED TO BE THIS COLD.

It is nine years newer than the pavilion. The Cradle did not build it. I did not draw it. Nobody asked me. It came out of a five-hour meeting between two factions who agree about nothing, after an eighty-year-old man said the least manipulative thing I have ever heard said in a meeting, and it passed eleven to nil.

It is the best piece of architecture in this book, and this book contains sixty-eight of my plates.

FOUR. WHAT THAT DOES TO THE DEFINITION

Radical joy is grief turned inside out and made public and architectural. I have not withdrawn a word of that and I am not going to.

But I have been saying it as though the conversion were something a designer performs. As though it happens in the studio, in the drawing, in the decision to reach for coral instead of grey. That is where I experience it, so I assumed that was where it lived, and for nine years nobody in my discipline corrected me, because my discipline has the same flattering habit.

It does not live there. The drawing is a proposal. The conversion happens when a neighbourhood argues for five hours in weather and builds a step, or when sixty people repaint nine acres in a day and a half so that a nine-year-old on the Astoria shore will look up and see her father's colour, or when a woman with a shoebox of

index cards defeats a removal order without saying more than nine words.

A student teacher from Chicago, whose name I did not get, told a boy of fifteen at Sherman Creek that the trouble with this island is that it treats the thing as a miracle instead of as a policy. That sentence took the roof off my practice. If it is a miracle then it is mine and I am the hero of it. If it is a policy then I am a contractor, and the work is to make more of it, and there is no ceremony in that at all.

WHAT I WILL DO

The atlases stand. Both are bound in at the back of this volume complete, forty-eight plates, uncorrected, so that the drawing and the correction can be read against one another by anybody who wants to.

What changes is that I will not draw the machines alone again. Every subsequent volume of this work will contain the seawall — not as staffage, not as the little figures architects put at the bottom of an elevation to establish scale and imply that somebody will eventually use the building, but as the second party to the conversation, drawn at the same weight, with a lamp in its hand.

And the prohibition holds. No black, on any page, in any volume, for as long as I am doing this. The palette will keep going up. Coral, flame, sun, lime, grass, jade, sky, cobalt, violet, magenta, rose. Tasteful was the last place my grey was hiding and I have thrown it out.

LAST

A boy of nine asked me at the bottom of the Long Stair what radical joy is, and because he is nine and would have noticed at once if I had performed, I gave him the plainest answer I have: it is when the thing that hurt you comes back out of you as something enormous and painted and useful that other people can stand under.

He asked whether that was what his word was. I said yes.

He said: again.

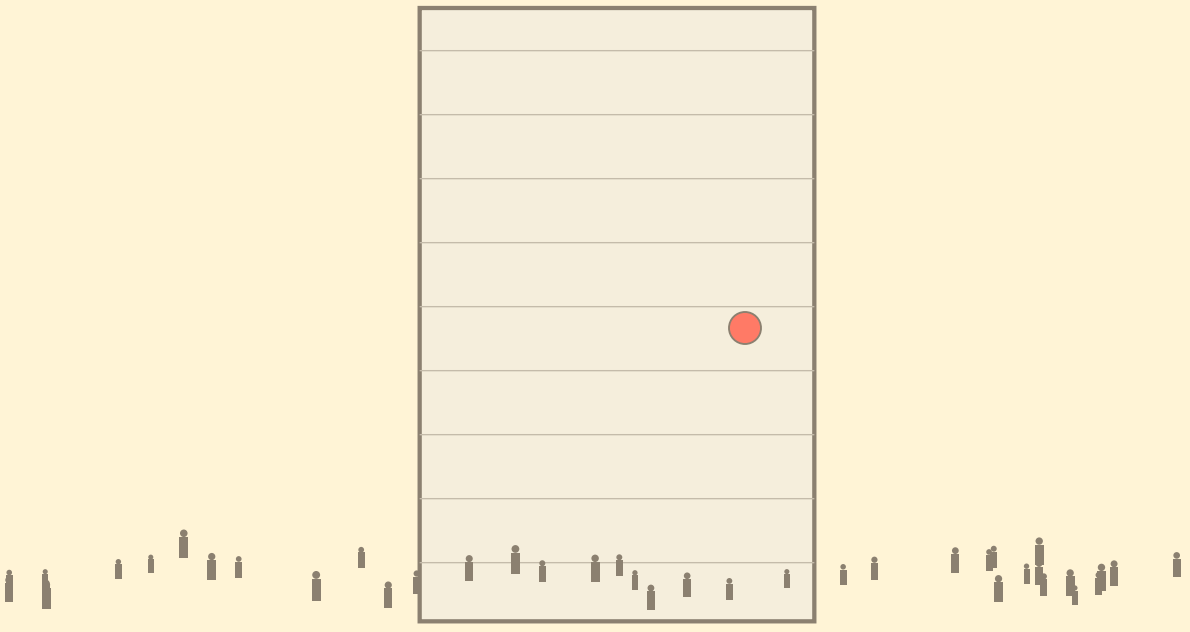
That happened. It was good. It is over.

Do it again anyway.

Pier Seventy-Six, the ring deck, first light.
Surjan

PLATE OF THE ARGUMENT · THE ONLY DIAGRAM IN THE BOOK WITH NO SCALE

A DOOR THAT IS ALWAYS OPEN



TURNED INSIDE OUT AND MADE PUBLIC

RADICAL JOY

PLATE XI

The Argument

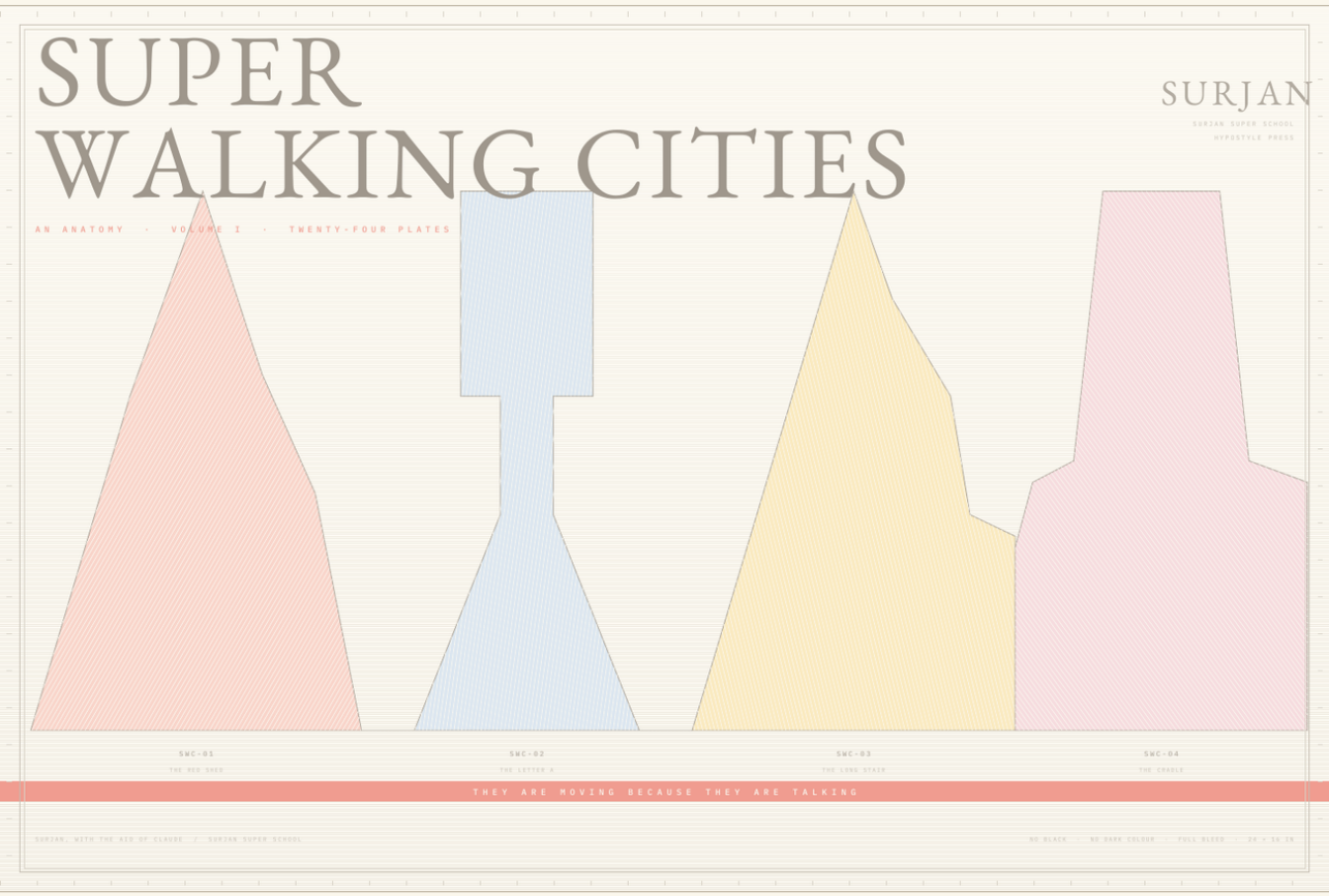
grief turned inside out and made public and architectural

THE ATLAS, BOUND IN

An Anatomy

twenty-four full-bleed plates at twenty-four by sixteen inches, reproduced complete and in order

00 *Cover*
01 *Rules of the Plate*
02 *Legend of Parts*
03 *Family Portrait: One Scale*
04 *The Red Shed*
05 *The Letter A*
06 *The Long Stair*
07 *The Cradle*
08 *The Red Shed — Long Section*
09 *The Letter A — Long Section*
10 *The Long Stair — Long Section*
11 *The Cradle — Long Section*
12 *Typical Deck Plan*
13 *The Crown Plan*
14 *Leg, Collar, Foot, Pad*
15 *Gait: One Hour, Four Steps*
16 *Air: The Pneumatic Lung*
17 *Water: The Super Water Pavilion*
18 *How the Cities Converse*
19 *Supergraphic Catalogue*
20 *Against the Island*
21 *Who Is Aboard*
22 *Two Inheritances*
23 *Index & Colophon*



I · PLATE 00

Cover

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

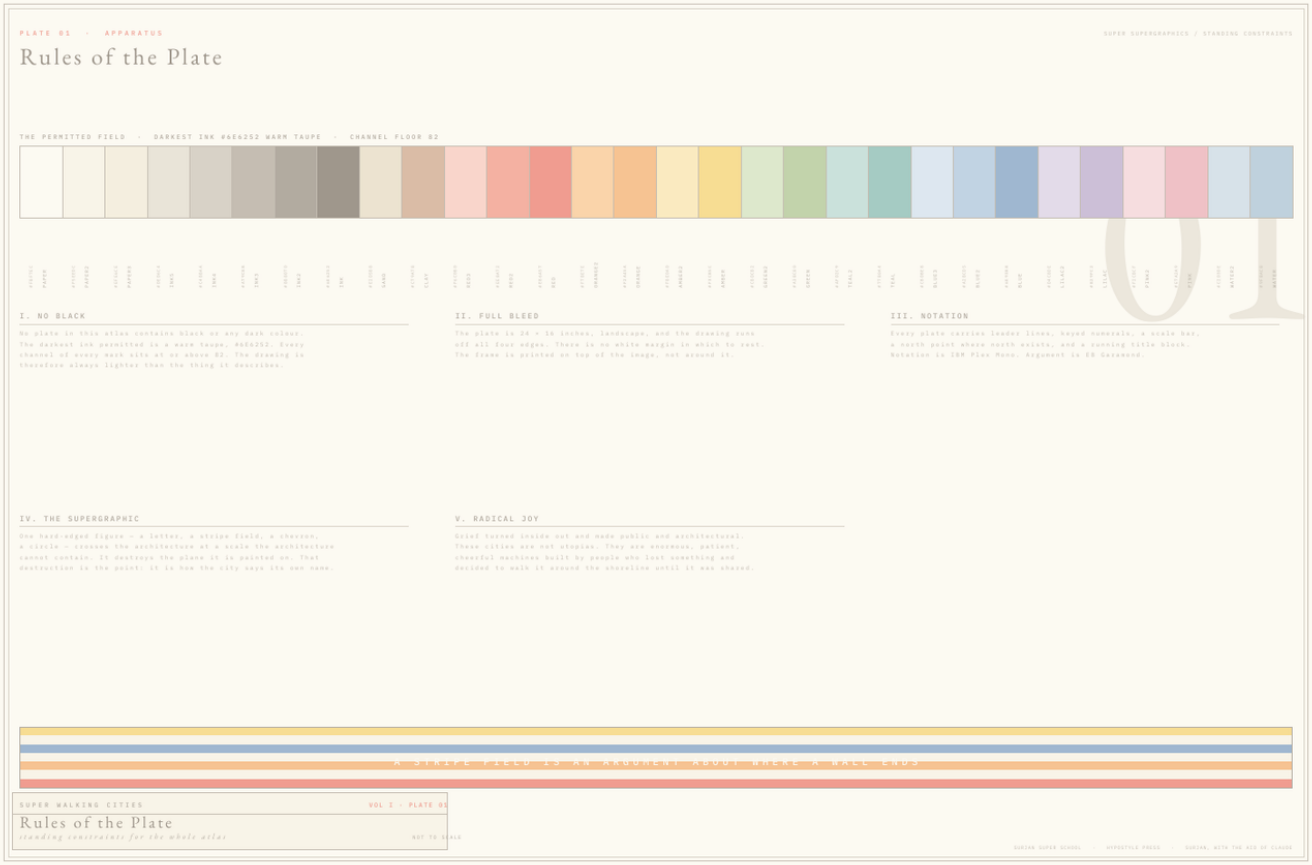


PLATE 01 · APPARATUS
SUPER SUPERGRAPHICS / STANDING CONSTRAINTS
Rules of the Plate
THE PERMITTED FIELD · DARKEST INK #6E6252 WARM TAUPE · CHANNEL FLOOR 82
01
I. NO BLACK
No plate in this atlas contains black or any dark colour. The darkest ink permitted is a warm taupe, #6E6252. Every channel of every mark sits at or above 82. The drawing is therefore always lighter than the thing it describes.
II. FULL BLEED
The plate is 24 × 16 inches, landscape, and the drawing runs off all four edges. There is no white margin in which to rest. The frame is printed on top of the image, not around it.
III. NOTATION
Every plate carries leader lines, keyed numerals, a scale bar, a north point where north exists, and a running title block. Notation is IBM Plex Mono. Argument is EB Garamond.
IV. THE SUPERGRAPHIC
One hard-edged figure — a letter, a stripe field, a chevron, a circle — crosses the architecture at a scale the architecture cannot contain. It destroys the plane it is painted on. That destruction is the point: it is how the city says its own name.
V. RADICAL JOY
Grief turned inside out and made public and architectural. These cities are not utopias. They are ferocious, patient, cheerful machines built by people who lost something and decided to walk it around the shoreline until it was shared.
A STRIPE FIELD IS AN ARGUMENT ABOUT WHERE A WALL ENDS
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 01
Rules of the Plate
standing constraints for the whole atlas
NOT TO SCALE
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HYPESTYLE PRESS · SURJAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

I · PLATE 01

Rules of the Plate

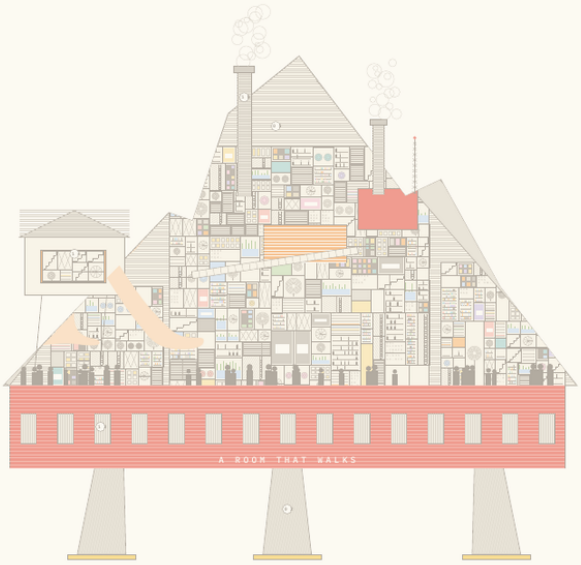
24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

PLATE 02 · APPARATUS

Legend of Parts

READ THIS PLATE FIRST



KEY

01 PAD
cast foot; spreads 41,000 t over marine clay

02 HAIRPIN PILOTIS
tapered bearing leg; gilt collar at grade

03 TRESTLE
paired leg carrying the long deck

04 DECK SLAB
the datum; all speech happens above it

05 CUT CELL
a room opened to the drawing

06 MEZZANINE
half floor inserted after arrival

07 STAIR
public; never enclosed; never locked

08 BRIDGE
temporary; thrown to a neighbouring city

09 GRIDSHELL DOME
air room; the lung of the deck

10 STACK
warm-air chimney; plume is the visible curve

11 MAST
signal; carries the lamp and the flag

12 LAMP
amber; lit only while the city is walking

13 PLINTH
flat saloon; the one surface everybody sees

14 CARRIED ROOM
a house held at shoulder height, on loan

15 SPEECH REGISTER
painted hand; the last thing said

16 WATER PAVILION
floating annex; deploys at each station

02

TONE · WHAT EACH FIELD MEANS

RED — the public surface
ORANGE — occupied room
AMBER — speech / signal
BLUE — slow water plant
TEAL — wet engineering
GREEN — growing deck
LILAC — enclosure
PINK — the cradle
CLAY — pot and ballast
SAND — structure

0 100 400 FT

SUPER WALKING CITIES — VOL I · PLATE 02

Legend of Parts

the sixteen things every walking city has

1 : 2000 (APPX)

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HYPOSTYLE PRESS · SURJAN, WITH THE ACE OF CLAWS

I · PLATE 02

Legend of Parts

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

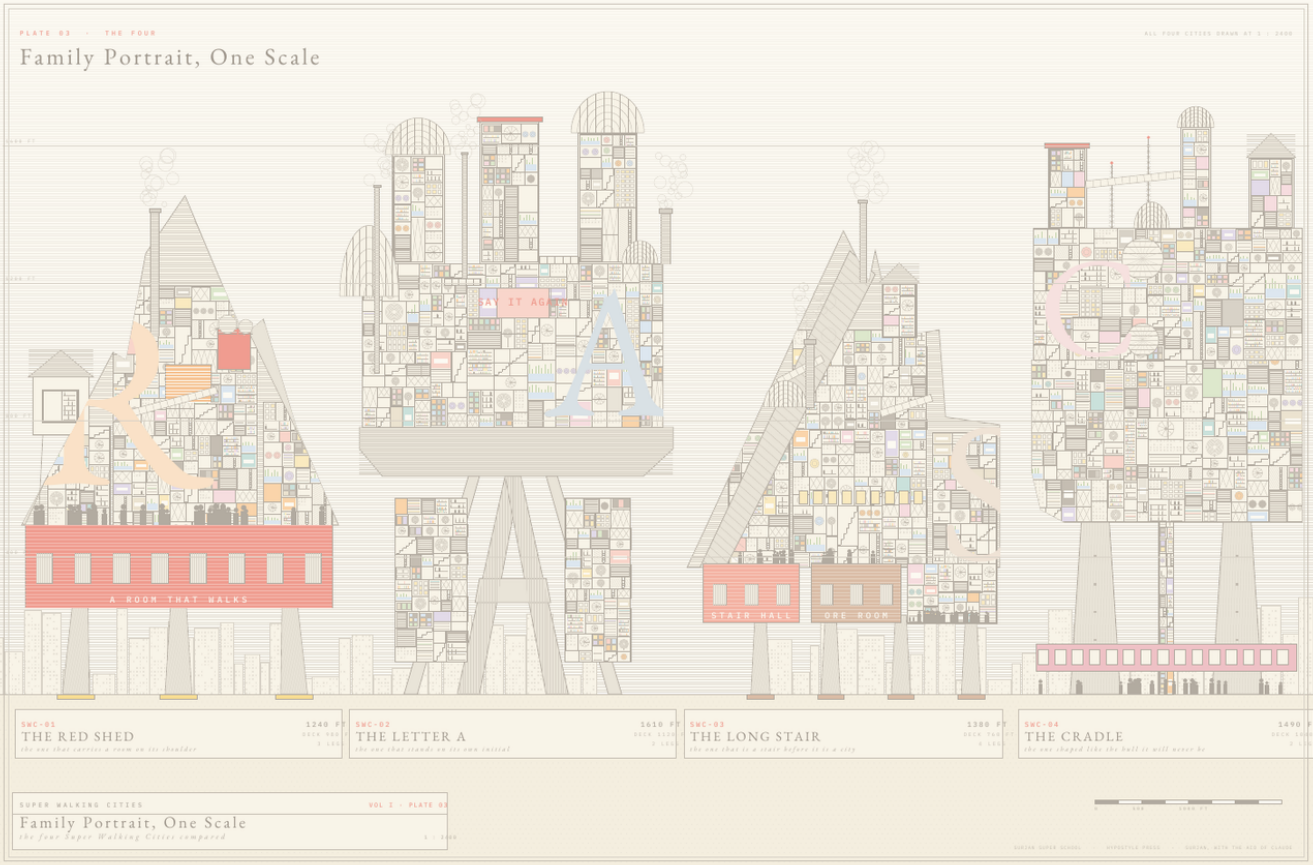


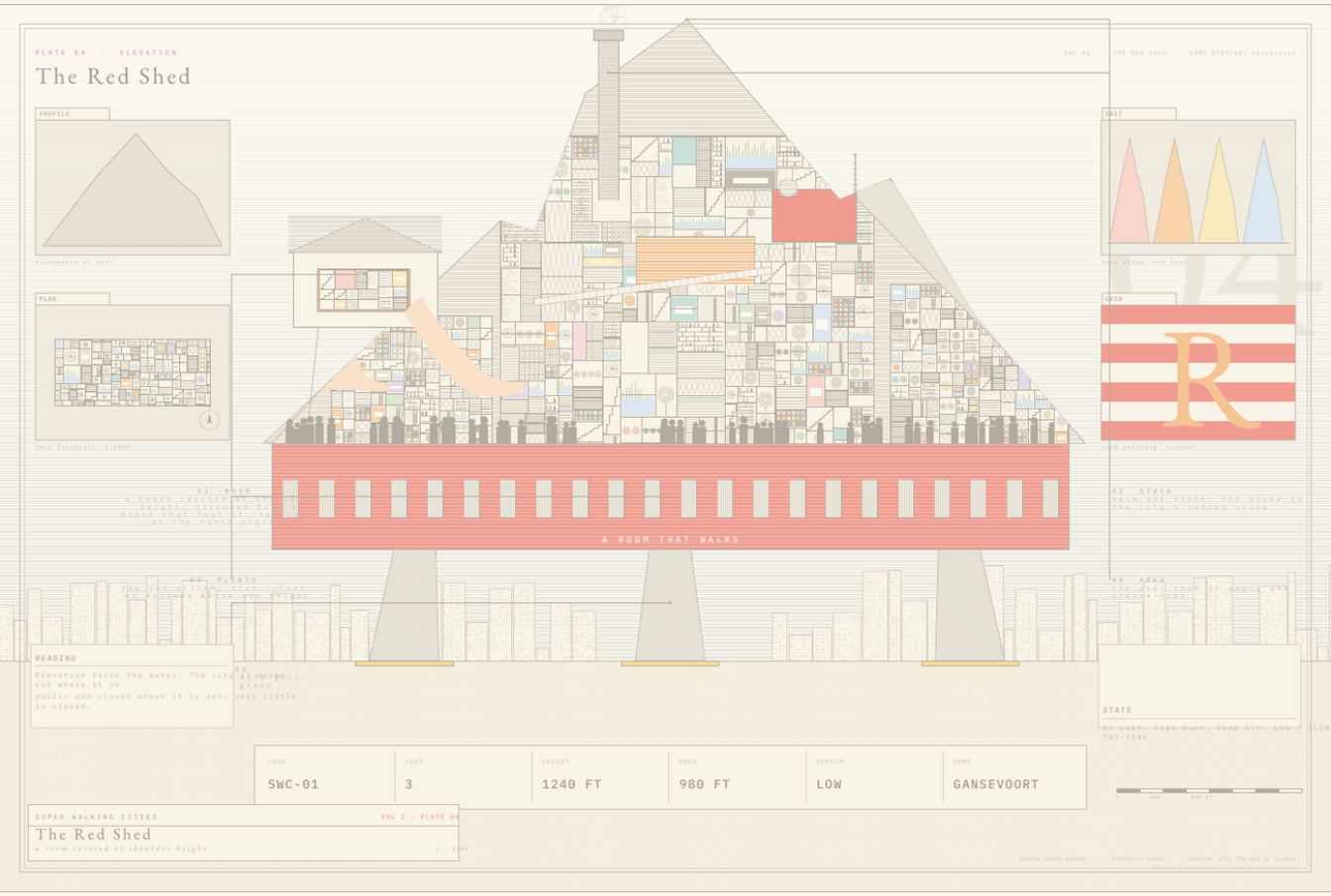
PLATE 03 · THE FOUR
Family Portrait, One Scale
ALL FOUR CITIES DRAWN AT 1 : 2000
SAY IT AGAIN
A ROOM THAT WALKS
STAIR HALL
ORE ROOM
SWC-01
THE RED SHED
1240 FT
the one that carries a room on its shoulder
SWC-02
THE LETTER A
1610 FT
the one that stands on its own initial
SWC-03
THE LONG STAIR
1380 FT
the one that is a stair before it is a city
SWC-04
THE CRADLE
1490 FT
the one shaped like the hull it will never be
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 03
Family Portrait, One Scale
the four Super Walking Cities compared
1 : 2000
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HYPESTYLE PRESS · SURJAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

I · PLATE 03

Family Portrait: One Scale

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

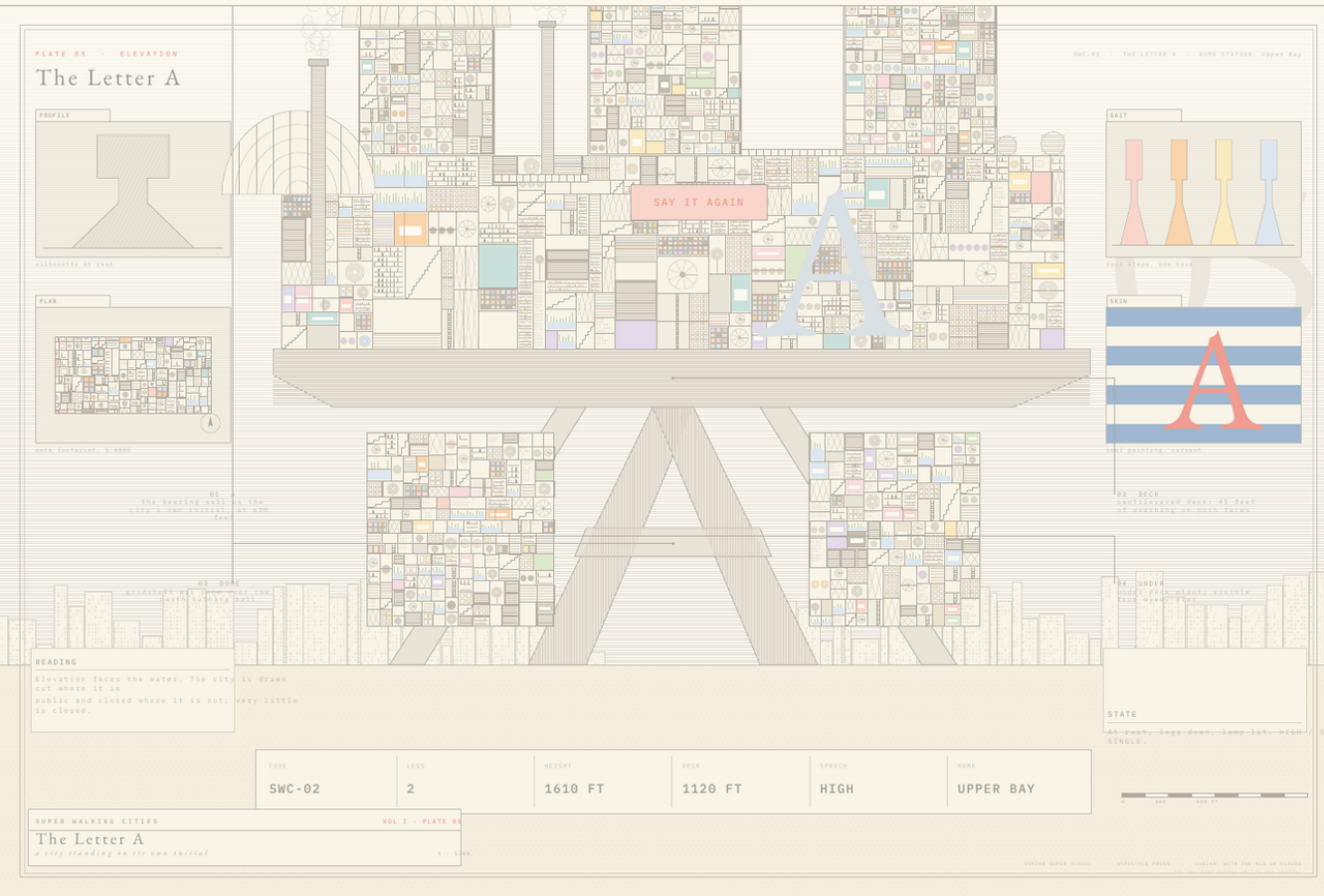


I · PLATE 04

The Red Shed

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

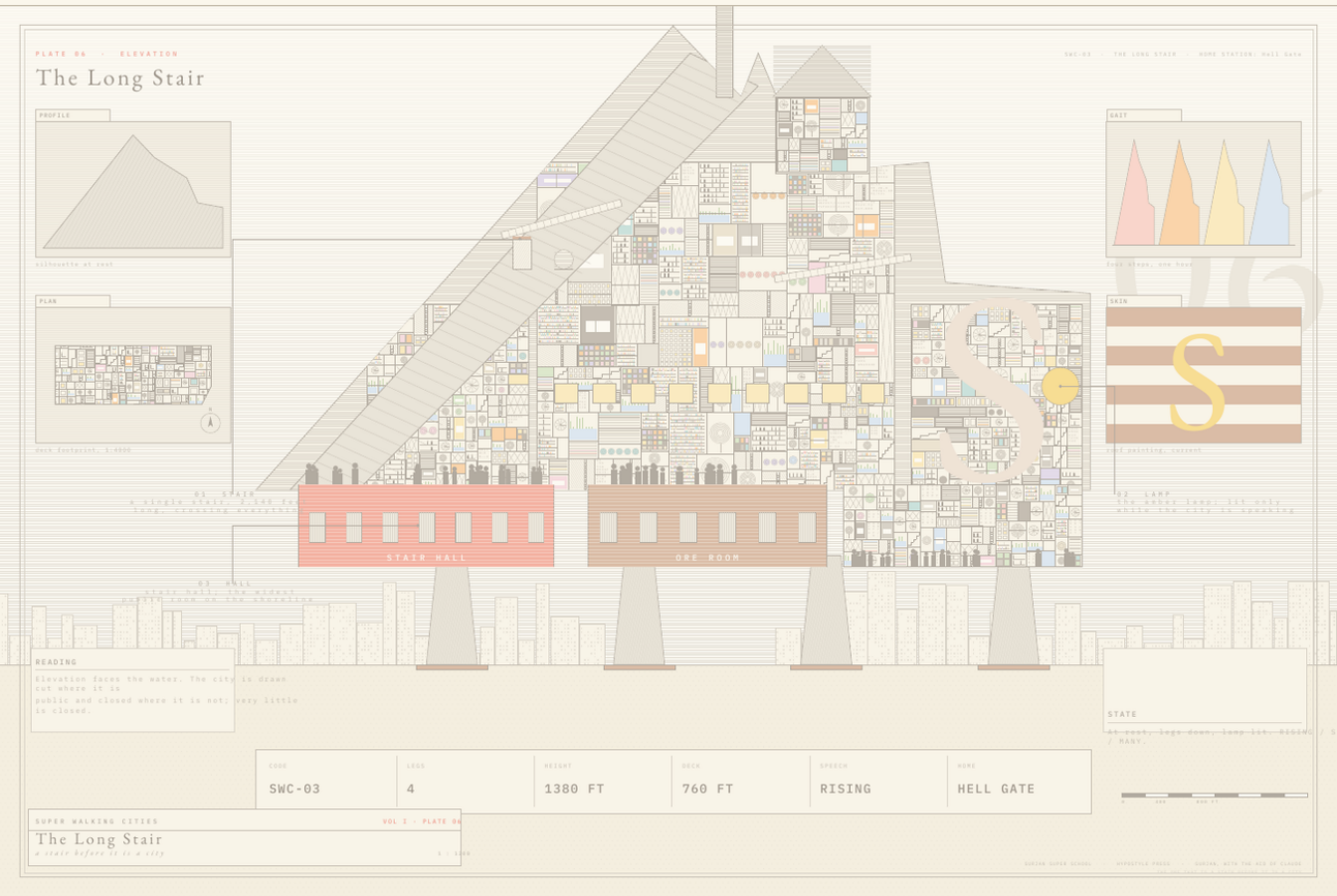


I · PLATE 05

The Letter A

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

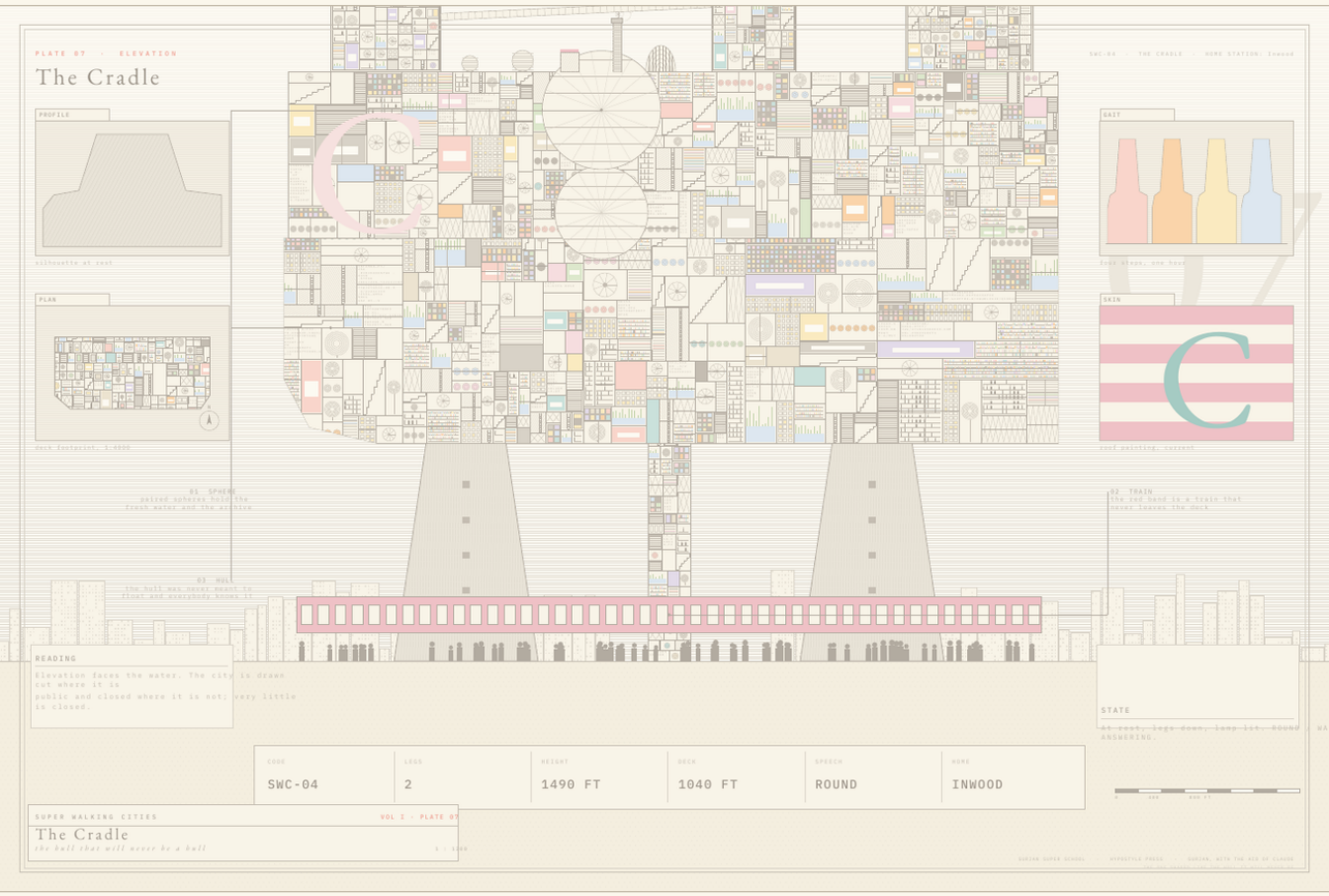


I · PLATE 06

The Long Stair

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL



I · PLATE 07

The Cradle

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

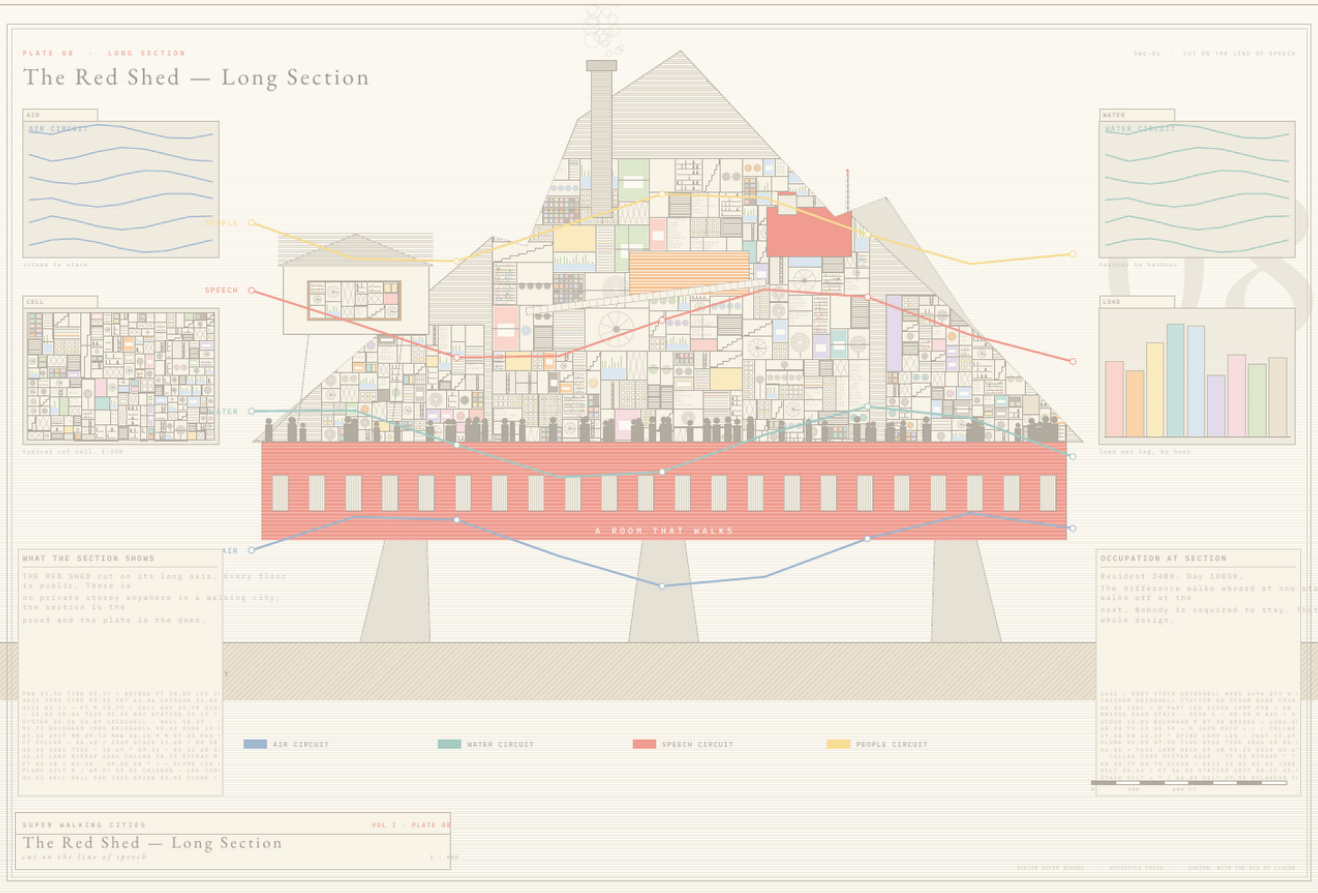


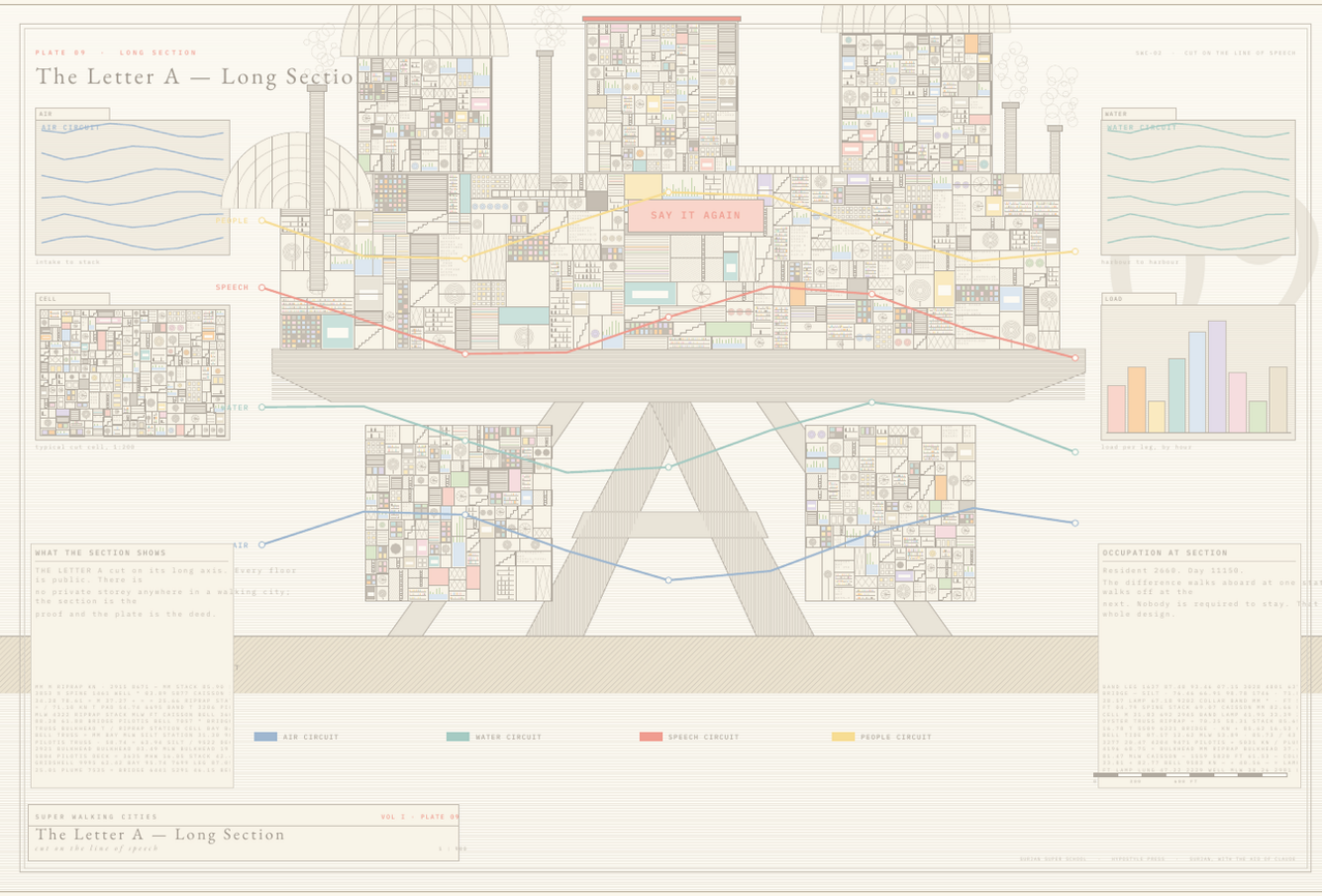
PLATE 08 · LONG SECTION
The Red Shed — Long Section
AIR
AIR CIRCUIT
intake to stack
WATER
WATER CIRCUIT
harbour to harbour
CELL
typical cut cell, 1:200
LOAD
load per leg, by hour
PEOPLE
SPEECH
WATER
AIR
A ROOM THAT WALKS
WHAT THE SECTION SHOWS
The RED SHED cut on its long axis. Every floor is public. There is no private storey anywhere in a walking city; the section is the proof and the plate is the deed.
OCCUPATION AT SECTION
Resident 2488. Day 10850.
The difference walks aboard at one station and walks off at the next. Nobody is required to stay. That is the whole design.
AIR CIRCUIT
WATER CIRCUIT
SPEECH CIRCUIT
PEOPLE CIRCUIT
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 08
The Red Shed — Long Section
cut on the line of speech

I · PLATE 08

The Red Shed — Long Section

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL



I · PLATE 09

The Letter A — Long Section

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

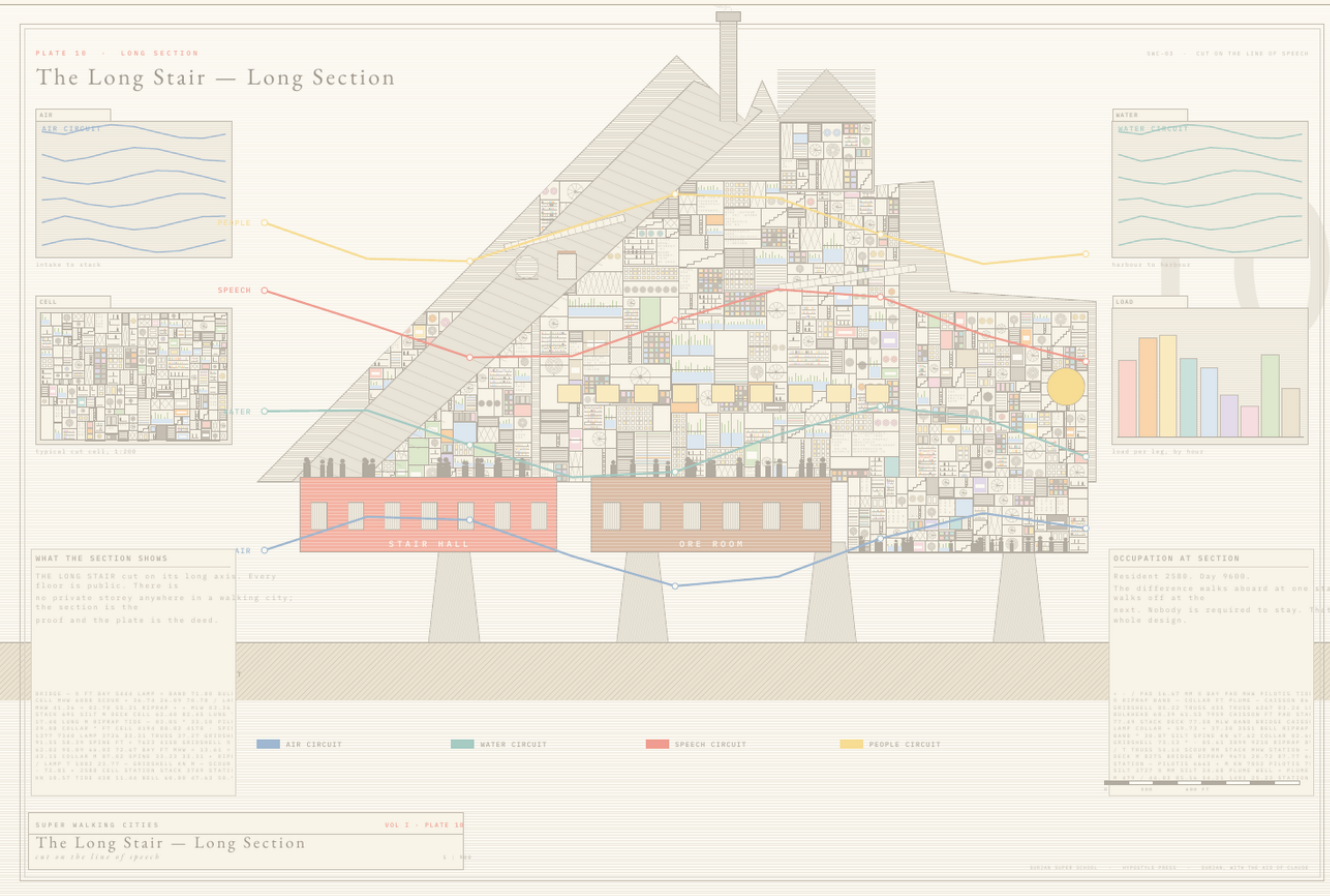


PLATE 10 · LONG SECTION
The Long Stair — Long Section
SEC-03 · CUT ON THE LINE OF SPEECH
AIR
AIR CIRCUIT
intake to stack
WATER
WATER CIRCUIT
harbour to harbour
PEOPLE
SPEECH
CELL
typical cut cell, 1:200
LOAD
load per leg, by hour
STAIR HALL
ORE ROOM
WHAT THE SECTION SHOWS
The LONG STAIR cut on its long axis. Every floor is public. There is no private storey anywhere in a walking city; the section is the proof and the plate is the deed.
OCCUPATION AT SECTION
Resident 2588. Day 9600.
The difference walks aboard at one station, walks off at the next. Nobody is required to stay. That is the whole design.
AIR CIRCUIT
WATER CIRCUIT
SPEECH CIRCUIT
PEOPLE CIRCUIT
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 10
The Long Stair — Long Section
cut on the line of speech

I · PLATE 10

The Long Stair — Long Section

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

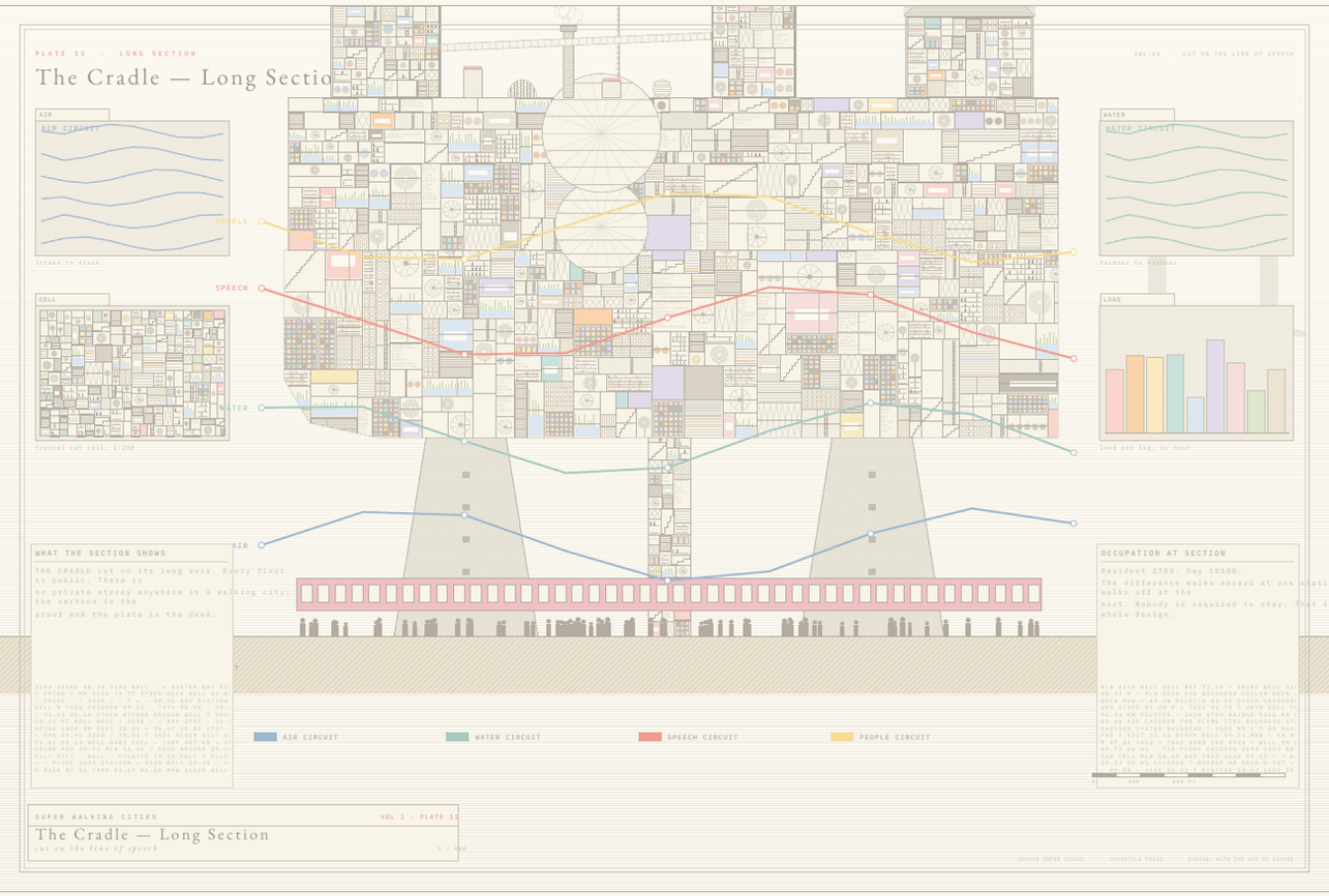


PLATE 11 · LONG SECTION
The Cradle — Long Sectio
AIR CIRCUIT
WATER CIRCUIT
CELL
LOAD
PEOPLE
SPEECH
WATER
AIR
WHAT THE SECTION SHOWS
The CRADLE cut on its long axis. Every floor is public. There is no private storey anywhere in a walking city; the section is the proof and the plate is the deed.
OCCUPATION AT SECTION
Resident 2788. Day 10100.
The difference walks aboard at one station and walks off at the next. Nobody is required to stay. That is the whole design.
AIR CIRCUIT
WATER CIRCUIT
SPEECH CIRCUIT
PEOPLE CIRCUIT
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 11
The Cradle — Long Section
cut on the line of speech

I · PLATE 11

The Cradle — Long Section

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

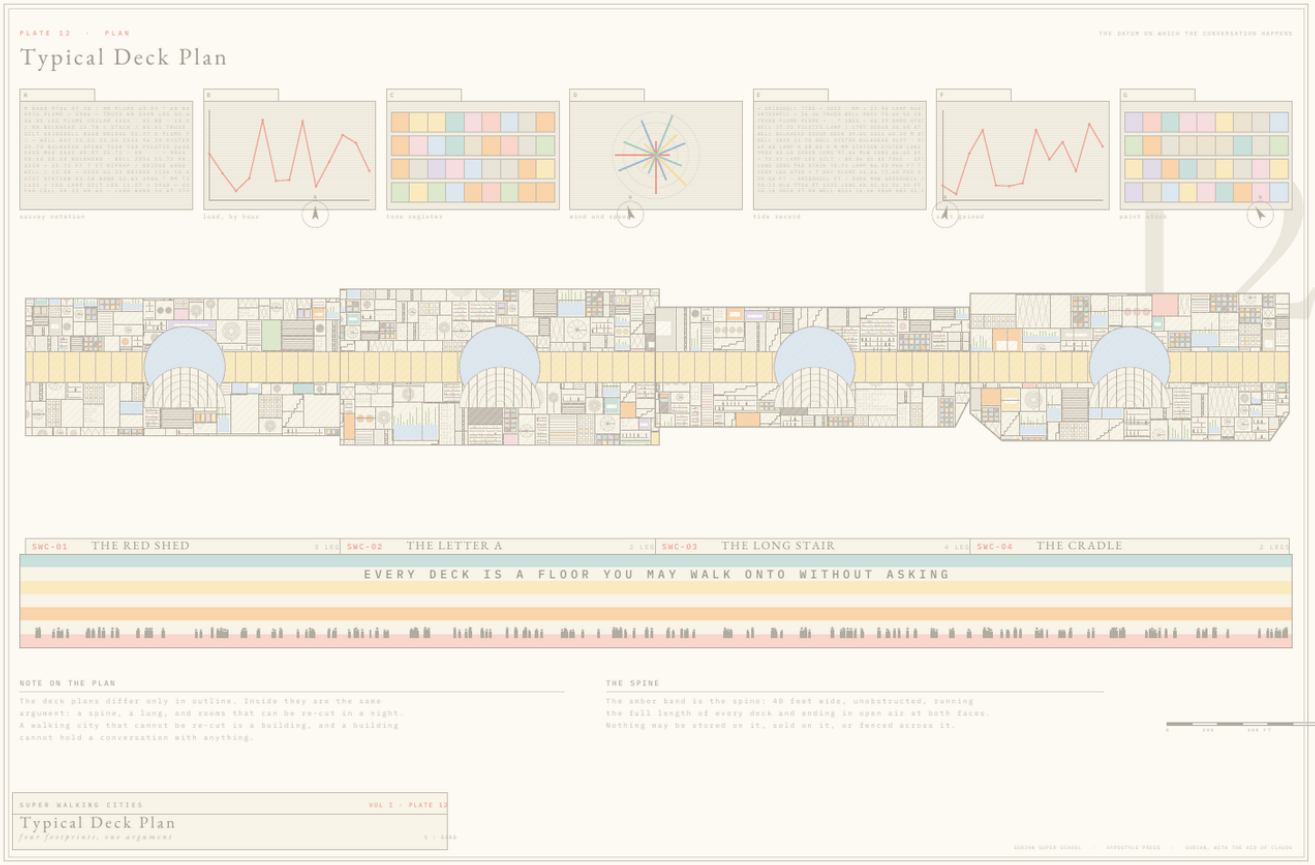


PLATE 12 · PLAN
Typical Deck Plan
THE DATUM ON WHICH THE CONVERSATION HAPPENS
SWC-01 THE RED SHED
SWC-02 THE LETTER A
SWC-03 THE LONG STAIR
SWC-04 THE CRADLE
EVERY DECK IS A FLOOR YOU MAY WALK ONTO WITHOUT ASKING
NOTE ON THE PLAN
The deck plans differ only in outline. Inside they are the same argument: a spine, a lung, and rooms that can be re-cut in a night. A walking city that cannot be re-cut is a building, and a building cannot hold a conversation with anything.
THE SPINE
The amber band is the spine: 40 feet wide, unobstructed, running the full length of every deck and ending in open air at both faces. Nothing may be stored on it, sold on it, or fenced across it.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 12
Typical Deck Plan
four footprints, one argument

I · PLATE 12

Typical Deck Plan

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

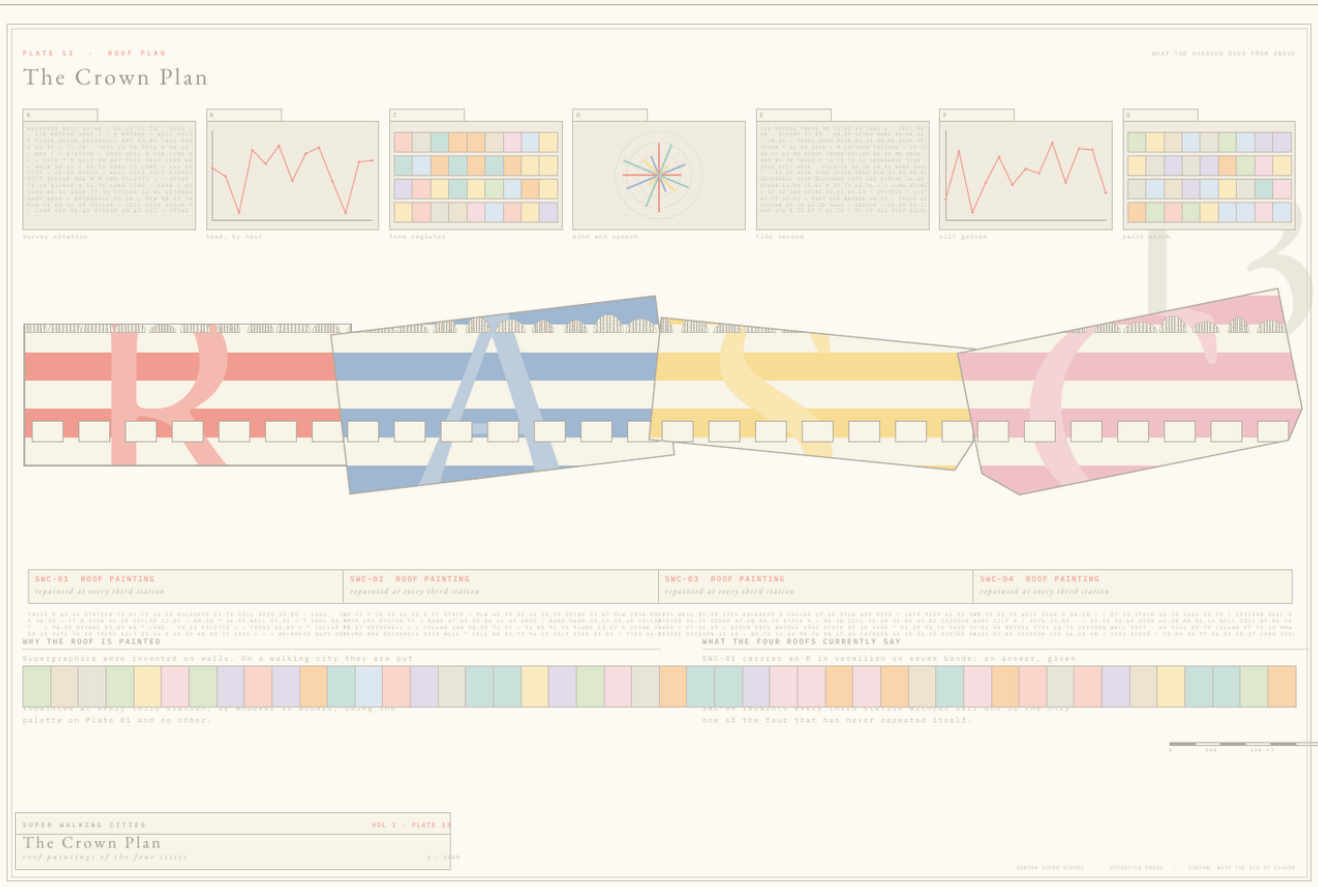


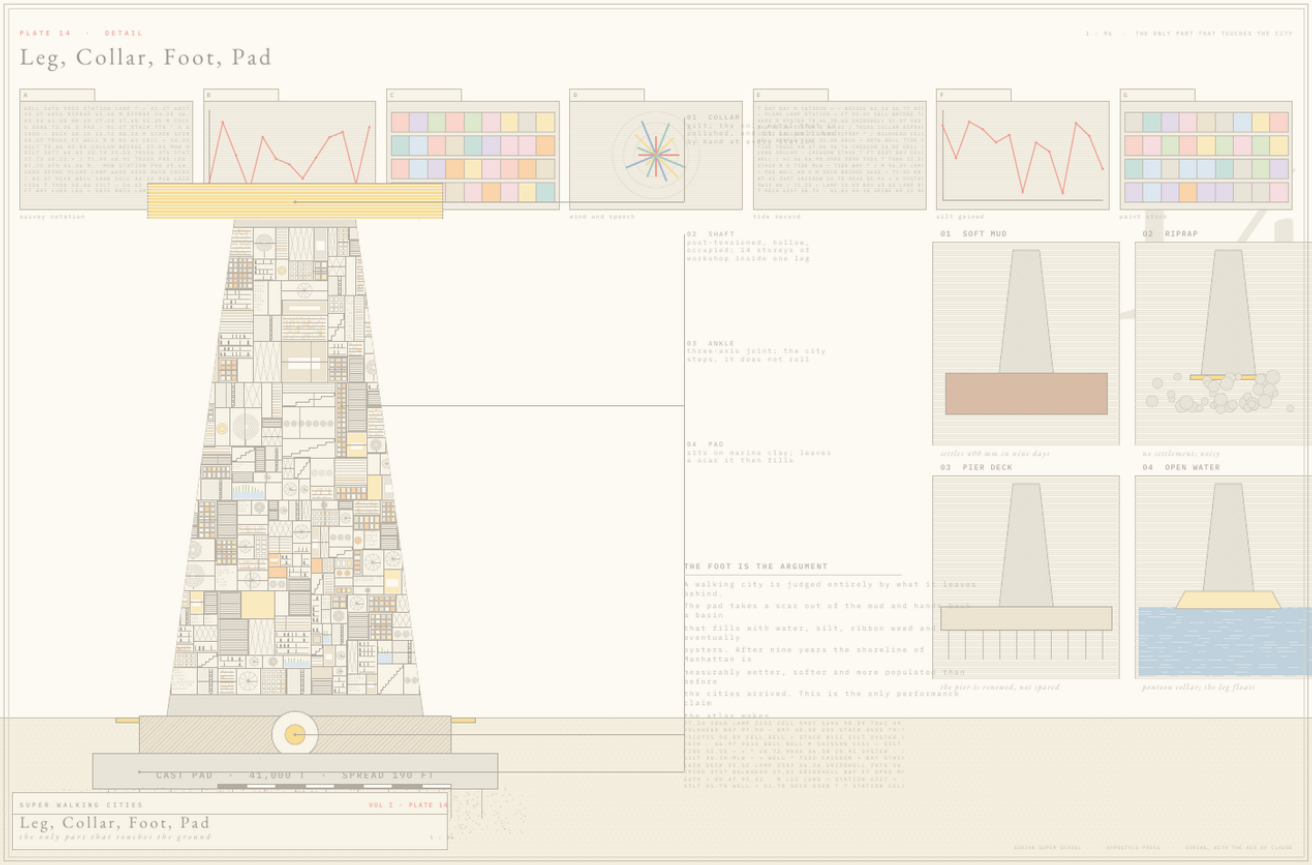
PLATE 13 · ROOF PLAN
The Crown Plan
WHAT THE HARBOUR SEES FROM ABOVE
survey notation
load, by hour
tone register
wind and speech
tide record
silt gained
paint stock
SWC-01 ROOF PAINTING
repainted at every third station
SWC-02 ROOF PAINTING
repainted at every third station
SWC-03 ROOF PAINTING
repainted at every third station
SWC-04 ROOF PAINTING
repainted at every third station
WHY THE ROOF IS PAINTED
Supergraphics were invented on walls. On a walking city they are put
WHAT THE FOUR ROOFS CURRENTLY SAY
SWC-01 carries an R in vermilion on seven bands: an answer, given
palette on Plate 01 and no other.
one of the four that has never repeated itself.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 13
The Crown Plan
roof paintings of the four cities

I · PLATE 13

The Crown Plan

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL



I · PLATE 14

Leg, Collar, Foot, Pad

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

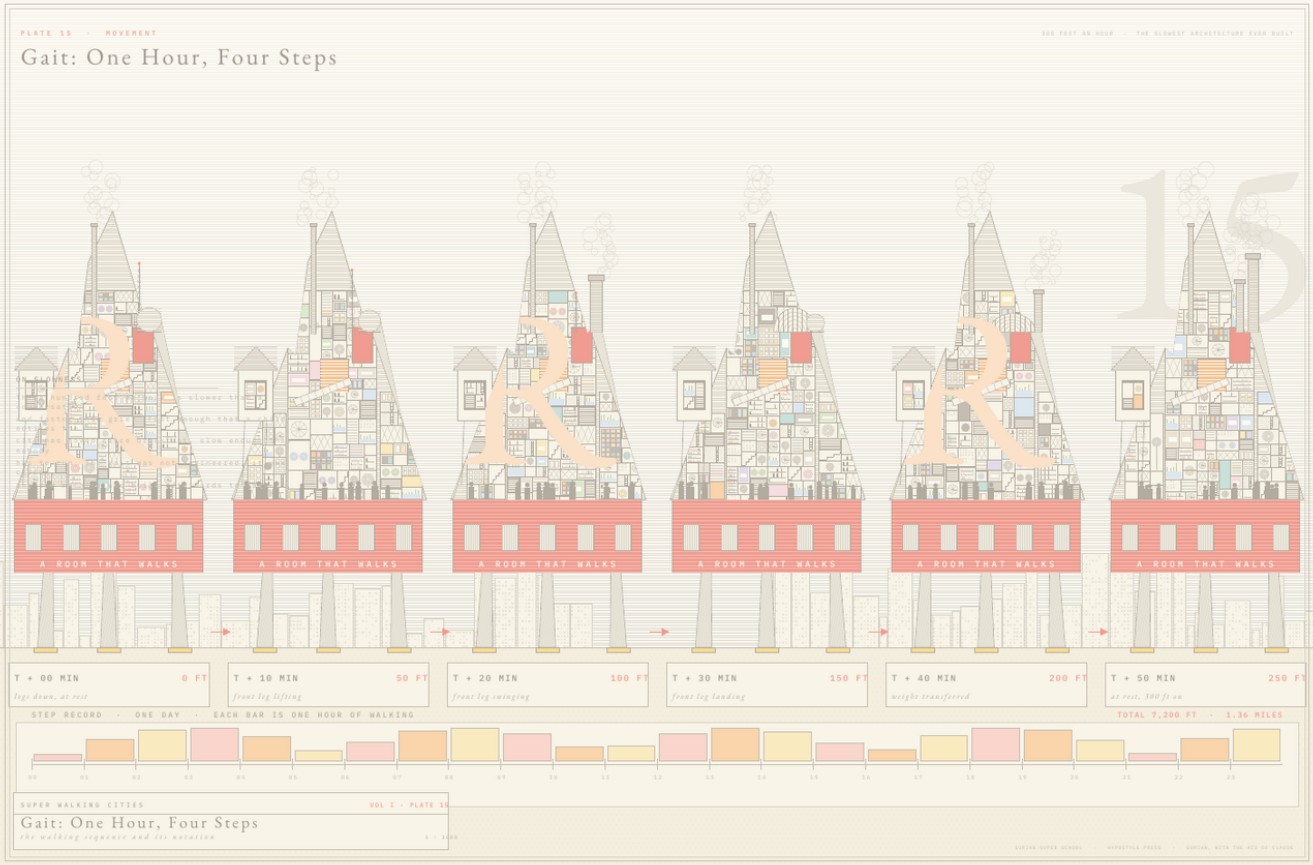


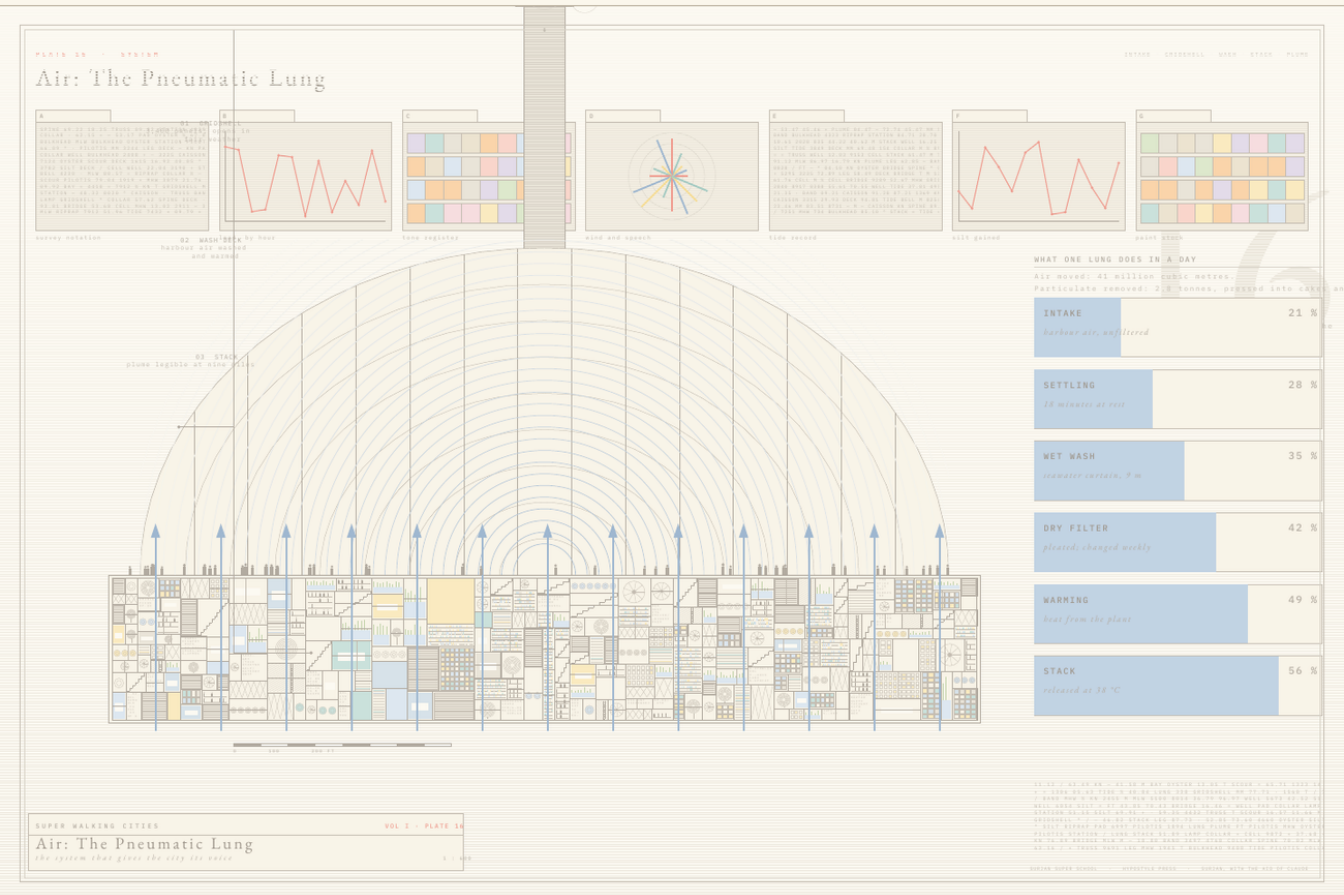
PLATE 15 · MOVEMENT
Gait: One Hour, Four Steps
15
A ROOM THAT WALKS
T + 00 MIN 0 FT
legs down, at rest
T + 10 MIN 50 FT
front leg lifting
T + 20 MIN 100 FT
front leg swinging
T + 30 MIN 150 FT
front leg landing
T + 40 MIN 200 FT
weight transferred
T + 50 MIN 250 FT
at rest, 300 ft on
STEP RECORD · ONE DAY · EACH BAR IS ONE HOUR OF WALKING
TOTAL 7,200 FT · 1.36 MILES
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 15
Gait: One Hour, Four Steps
the walking sequence and its notation

I · PLATE 15

Gait: One Hour, Four Steps

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL



I · PLATE 16

Air: The Pneumatic Lung

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

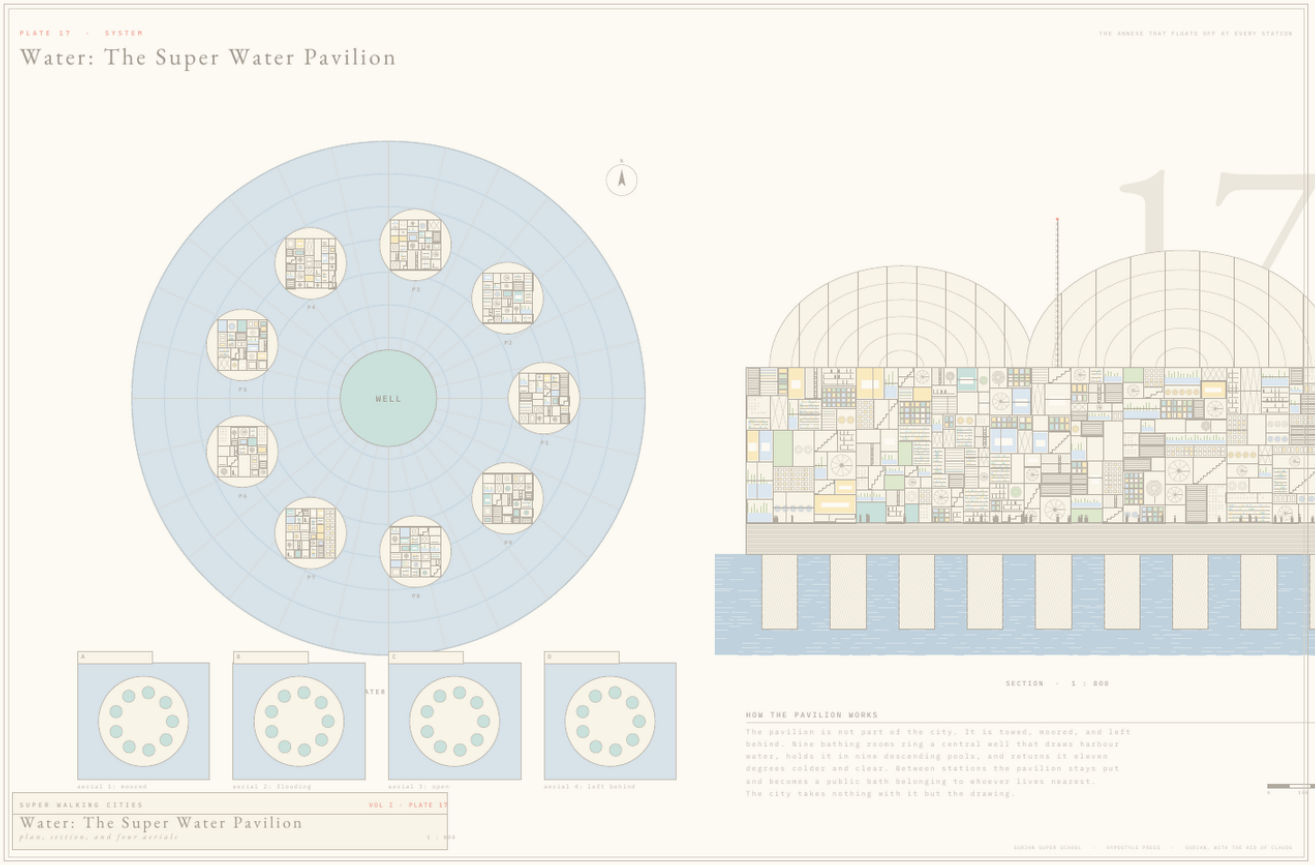


PLATE 17 · SYSTEM
Water: The Super Water Pavilion
THE ANNEXE THAT FLOATS OFF AT EVERY STATION
17
WELL
P1
P2
P3
P4
P5
P6
P7
P8
A
B
C
D
aerial 1: moored
aerial 2: flooding
aerial 3: open
aerial 4: left behind
SECTION · 1 : 800
HOW THE PAVILION WORKS
The pavilion is not part of the city. It is towed, moored, and left behind. Nine bathing rooms ring a central well that draws harbour water, holds it in nine descending pools, and returns it eleven degrees colder and clear. Between stations the pavilion stays put and becomes a public bath belonging to whoever lives nearest. The city takes nothing with it but the drawing.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 17
Water: The Super Water Pavilion
plan, section, and four aerials
1 : 800
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HYPOSTYLE PRESS · SURJAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

I · PLATE 17

Water: The Super Water Pavilion

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

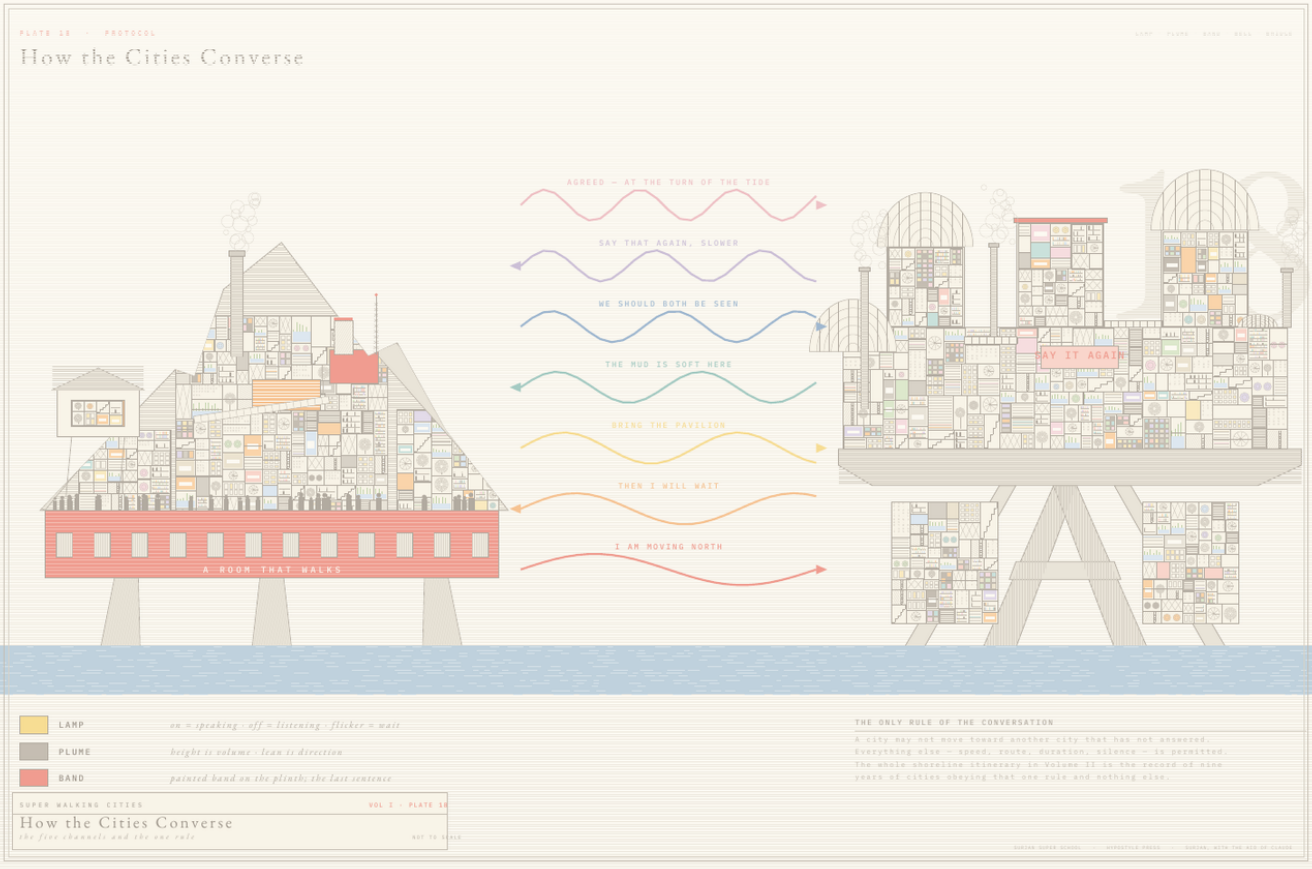


PLATE 18 · · PROTOCOL
How the Cities Converse
AGREED — AT THE TURN OF THE TIDE
SAY THAT AGAIN, SLOWER
WE SHOULD BOTH BE SEEN
THE MUD IS SOFT HERE
BRING THE PAVILION
THEN I WILL WAIT
I AM MOVING NORTH
A ROOM THAT WALKS
SAY IT AGAIN
LAMP
on = speaking · off = listening · flicker = wait
PLUME
height is volume · lean is direction
BAND
painted band on the plinth; the last sentence
THE ONLY RULE OF THE CONVERSATION
A city may not move toward another city that has not answered.
Everything else — speed, route, duration, silence — is permitted.
The whole shoreline itinerary in Volume II is the record of nine
years of cities obeying that one rule and nothing else.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 18
How the Cities Converse
the five channels and the one rule
NOT TO SCALE

I · PLATE 18

How the Cities Converse

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

PLATE 19 · SKIN
Supergraphic Catalogue
TWENTY-FOUR FIGURES THAT DESTROY THE PLANE THEY SIT ON
01 STRIPE FIELD
02 DIAGONAL
03 CHEVRON
04 TARGET
05 HALF DISC
06 SUPER LETTER
07 BAR CODE
08 STEP
09 ARC
10 SPLIT FIELD
11 DOT FIELD
12 LADDER
13 WEDGE
14 RING
15 CROSS BAND
16 FAN
17 COMB
18 SLOT
19 DOUBLE ARROW
20 QUARTER
21 ZIG
22 GRID
23 EYE
24 HORIZON
AFTER SEA RANCH
Supergraphics were invented in 1966 by Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, who painted hard-edged stripes, arrows, circles and letters across the interiors at The Sea Ranch at a scale the rooms could not contain. The figures destroyed the architectural plane and told you how to use the space at the same time. This catalogue takes that move outdoors, onto a moving object, at a thousand times the size. Twenty-four figures;
RULE OF APPLICATION
A figure may cross a joint, a floor, a window, a leg, and a person. It may not be resized to fit the surface it is painted on. If it does not run off the edge of the thing it is painted on, it is decoration and must be painted out.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 19
Supergraphic Catalogue
twenty-four figures for the skin of a walking city
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HYPOSTYLE PRESS · SURJAN, WITH THE ACE OF CLAUBS

I · PLATE 19

Supergraphic Catalogue

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

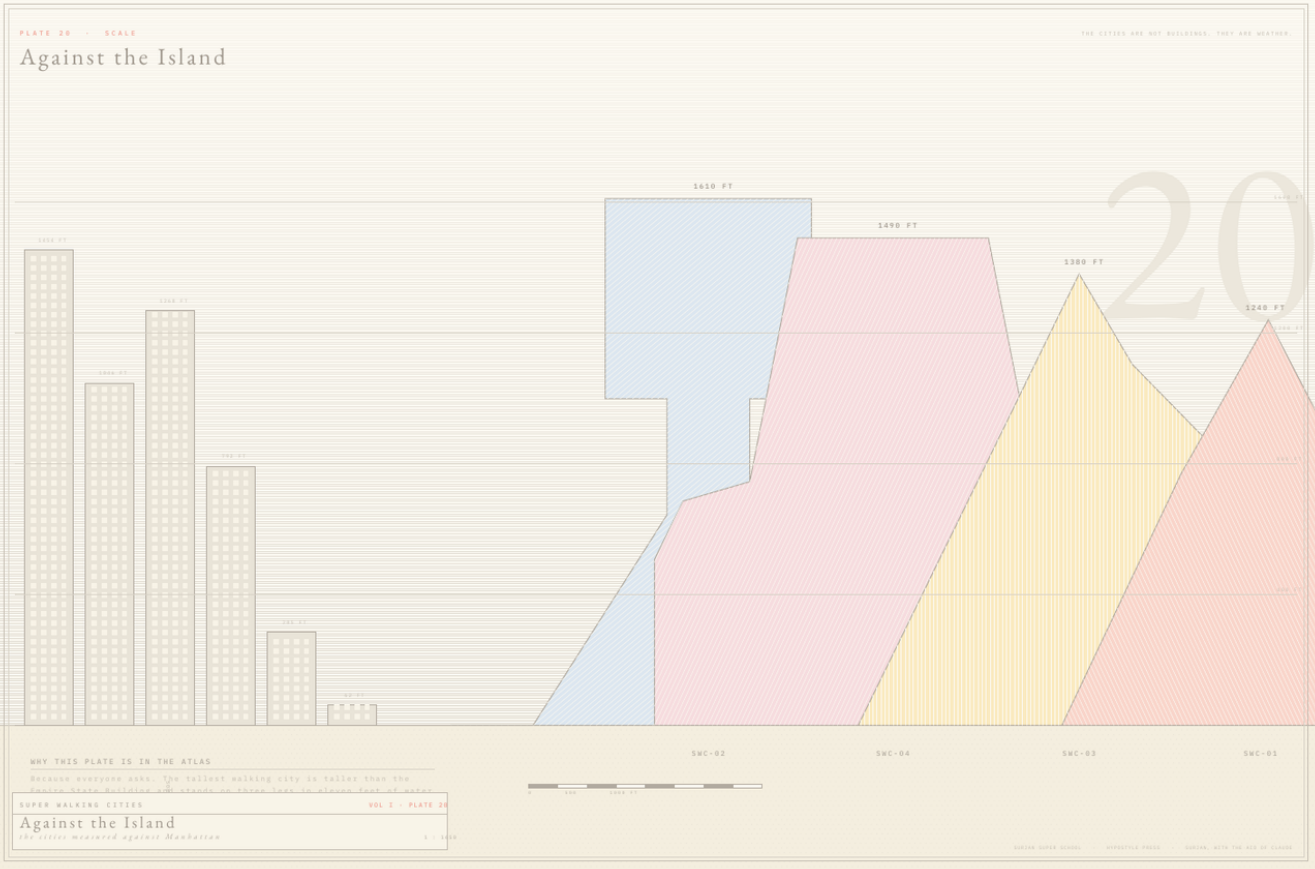


PLATE 20 · SCALE
Against the Island
THE CITIES ARE NOT BUILDINGS. THEY ARE WEATHER.
20
1610 FT
1490 FT
1380 FT
1240 FT
SWC-02
SWC-04
SWC-03
SWC-01
WHY THIS PLATE IS IN THE ATLAS
Because everyone asks. The tallest walking city is taller than the Empire State Building and stands on three legs to stay out of water.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 20
Against the Island
the cities measured against Manhattan

I · PLATE 20

Against the Island

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

PLATE 21 · OCCUPATION
ONE PLATE. ELEVEN THOUSAND PEOPLE
Who Is Aboard
BATHERS 1,400
nine pools, descending, always open
WALKERS 2,600
the deck is a street that leaves
READERS 900
the archive is 41,000 volumes and grows
GROWERS 1,10
eleven acres of soil carried at height
MAKERS 1,500
every workshop faces the water
SINGERS 700
the choir is how the city is tuned
SLEEPERS 1,800
no rent is charged and none is owed
MOURNERS 1,00
the reason all of this was built
THE COUNT
Eleven thousand aboard at midday; two thousand four hundred at night.
Nobody is required to stay, nobody is required to leave, and nobody
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL I · PLATE 21
Who Is Aboard
occupation of a single walking city at noon
1 FIGURE = 11 PEOPLE
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HYPESTYLE PRESS · SURJAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

I · PLATE 21

Who Is Aboard

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

PLATE 22 · PRECEDENT

SUPERGRAPHICS · WALKING ARCHITECTURE

Two Inheritances

I. SUPERGRAPHICS, 1965 –

Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, trained in Basel under Armin Hofmann, brought Swiss hard-edge modernism to California and in 1965–66 painted the interiors of The Sea Ranch — stripes, arrows, circles, letters — at a scale that broke the rooms open. Life magazine named the result 'supergraphics' in 1966. Charles Moore took the move further, using colour to explode the corners of his own buildings.

The lesson taken here: a graphic figure larger than its surface stops being decoration and becomes architecture. It tells you how to use the space and it destroys the plane at the same time.

The lesson refused here: that supergraphics belong indoors. On a walking city the figure is painted on the roof, at a thousand times the size, and aimed at another city across the water.

STRIPE + LETTER

CHEVRON + DISC

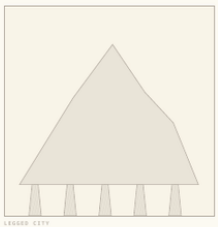
TARGET SERIES

II. WALKING ARCHITECTURE, 1964 –

Ron Herron's Walking City, drawn for Archigram in 1964, put an insect-legged metropolis in the East River and let it wander. Plug-In City and Instant City followed. Constant's New Babylon (1959–74) hung a nomadic sector-city above the old one. Superstudio's Continuous Monument (1969) laid a single gridded object across Manhattan and refused to explain itself.

The lesson taken here: a city that moves is an argument about who the ground belongs to.

The lesson refused here: the irony. These plates are not satire. The Super Walking Cities are built, occupied, warm, slow, and sincere. They walk because they are talking to each other, and the shoreline is the room they are talking in.



LEGGED CITY

PLUG-IN CELL

CONTINUOUS BAR

SUPER WALKING CITIES VOL I · PLATE 22

Two Inheritances

what this atlas takes and what it refuses

NOT TO SCALE

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HYPOSTYLE PRESS · SURJAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

I · PLATE 22

Two Inheritances

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

PLATE 23 · APPARATUS

END OF VOLUME I

Index & Colophon

00 Cover
01 Rules of the Plate
02 Legend of Parts
03 Family Portrait, One Scale
04 The Red Shed — Elevation
05 The Letter A — Elevation
06 The Long Stair — Elevation
07 The Cradle — Elevation
08 The Red Shed — Long Section
09 The Letter A — Long Section
10 The Long Stair — Long Section
11 The Cradle — Long Section
12 Typical Deck Plan
13 The Crown Plan
14 Leg, Collar, Foot, Pad
15 Gait: One Hour, Four Steps
16 Air: The Pneumatic Lung
17 Water: The Super Water Pavilion
18 How the Cities Converse
19 Supergraphic Catalogue
20 Against the Island
21 Who Is Aboard
22 Two Inheritances
23 Index & Colophon

COLOPHON

SUPER WALKING CITIES · VOLUME I : AN ANATOMY
Twenty-four full-bleed plates, 24 × 16 inches, landscape.
Drawn procedurally in Python and Reportlab. Typography: EB Garamond for argument, IBM Plex Mono for notation. Palette closed at thirty tones; darkest ink #6b5252 warm taupe; no black and no dark colour anywhere in the volume, verified at pixel level against every plate.
Volume II — SHORELINE: SITING & CONVERSATIONS — places the four cities at twelve speculative stations around the shoreline of Manhattan and records nine years of their conversation.
SURJAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HYPOSTYLE PRESS
surjansuperschool.com

23

RADICAL JOY · GRIEF TURNED INSIDE OUT AND MADE PUBLIC

SUPER WALKING CITIES VOL I · PLATE 23
Index & Colophon
end of volume one

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HYPOSTYLE PRESS · SURJAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

I · PLATE 23
Index & Colophon

24 × 16 IN
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

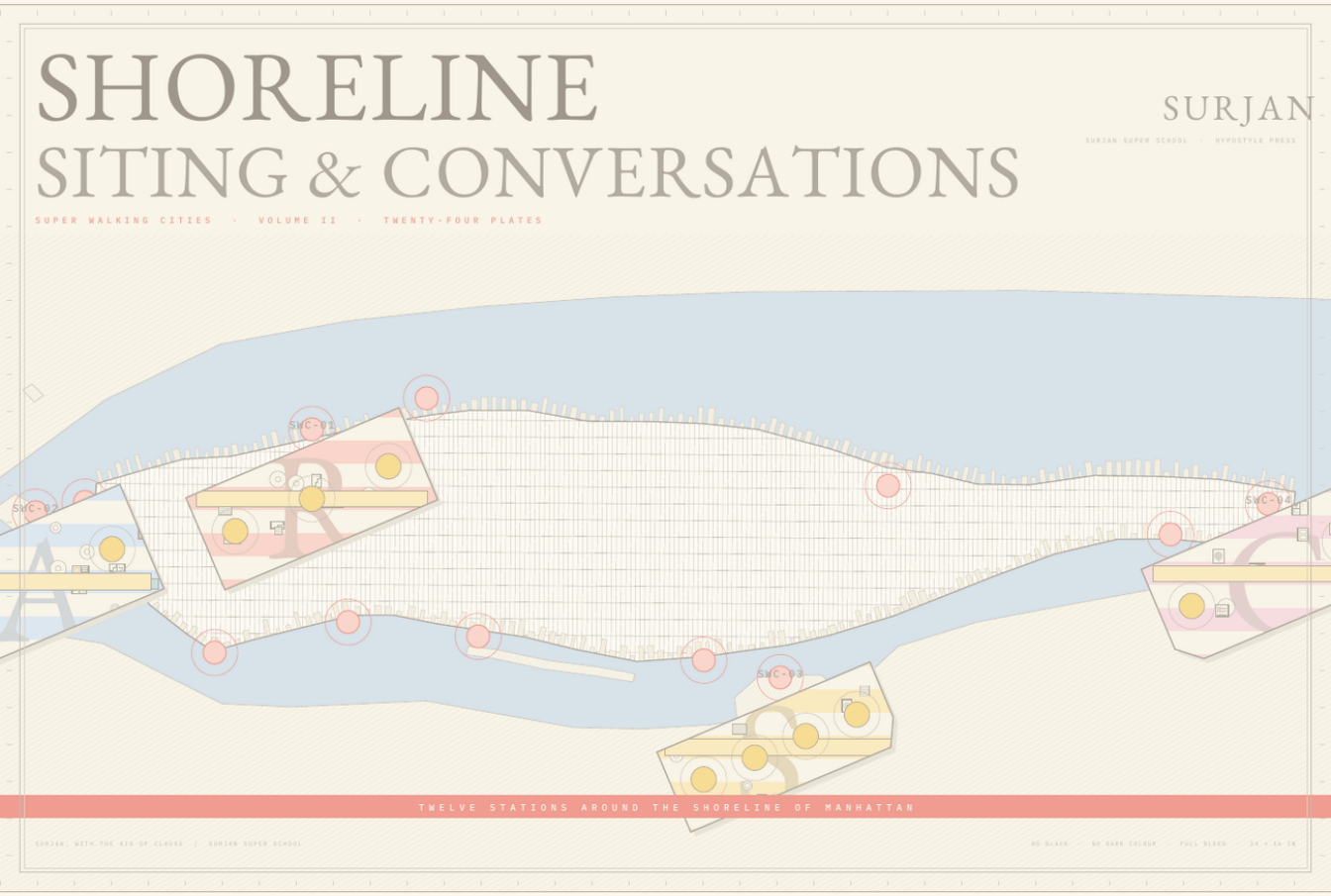
II

THE ATLAS, BOUND IN

Shoreline: Siting & Conversations

twenty-four full-bleed plates: twelve stations, four aerials, and the colloquy

00 *Cover*
01 *The Twelve Stations*
02 *Tide, Turn, and Station*
03 *Station One: The Battery*
04 *Station Two: Gansevoort*
05 *Station Three: Pier Seventy-Six*
06 *Station Four: West Harlem Piers*
07 *Station Five: Inwood Shoal*
08 *Station Six: Sherman Creek*
09 *Station Seven: Hell Gate*
10 *Station Eight: Mill Rock*
11 *Station Nine: Southpoint*
12 *Station Ten: Stuyvesant Cove*
13 *Station Eleven: Corlears Hook*
14 *Station Twelve: Governors Roads*
15 *Aerial: One Pavilion*
16 *Aerial: The Lower Fleet*
17 *Aerial: Nine Pools*
18 *Aerial: Left Behind*
19 *Nine Years of Conversation*
20 *The Hell Gate Colloquy*
21 *The Upper Bay Assembly*
22 *Wake and Bed*
23 *Index & Colophon*



II · PLATE 00

Cover

24 × 16 IN

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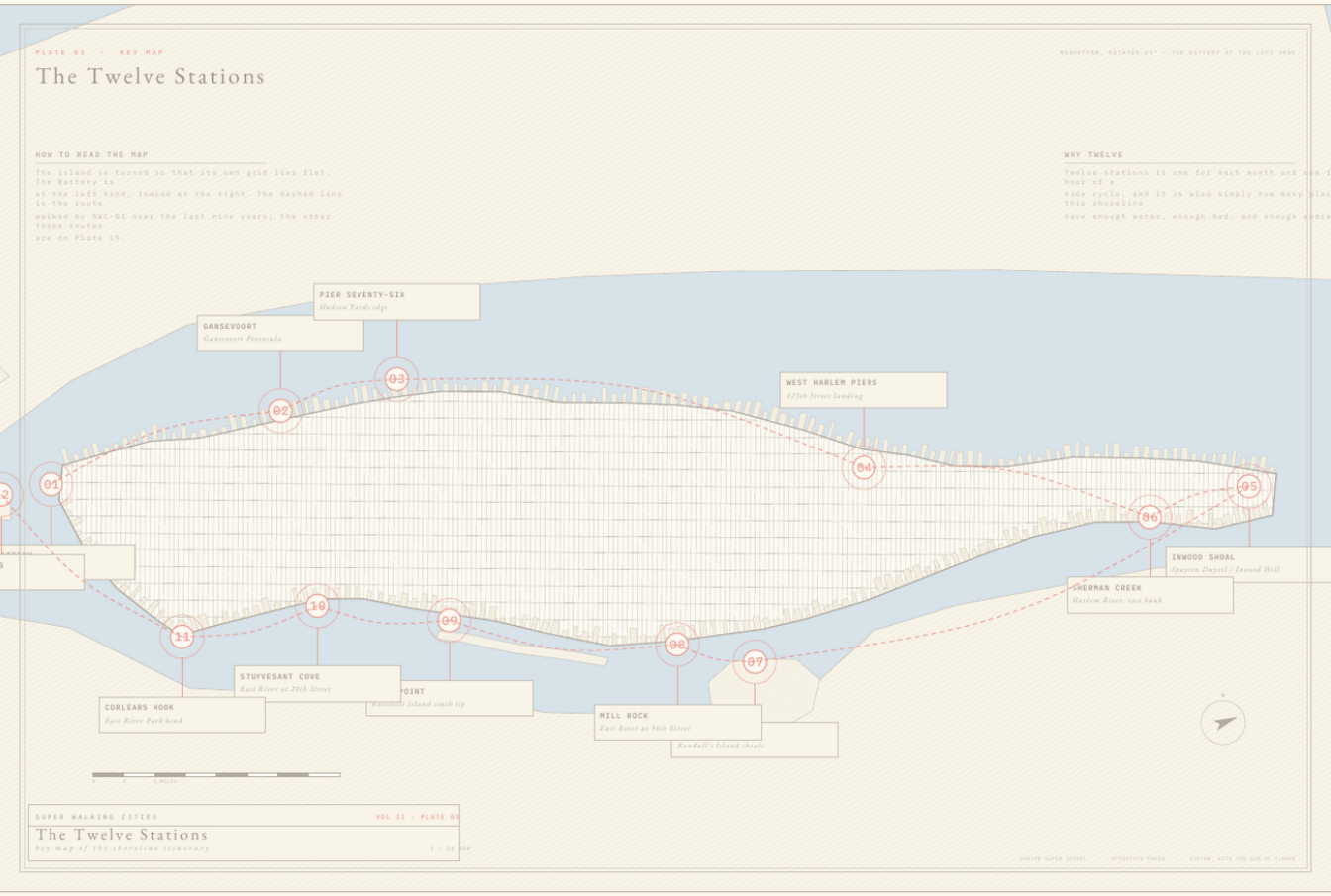

II · PLATE 01

The Twelve Stations

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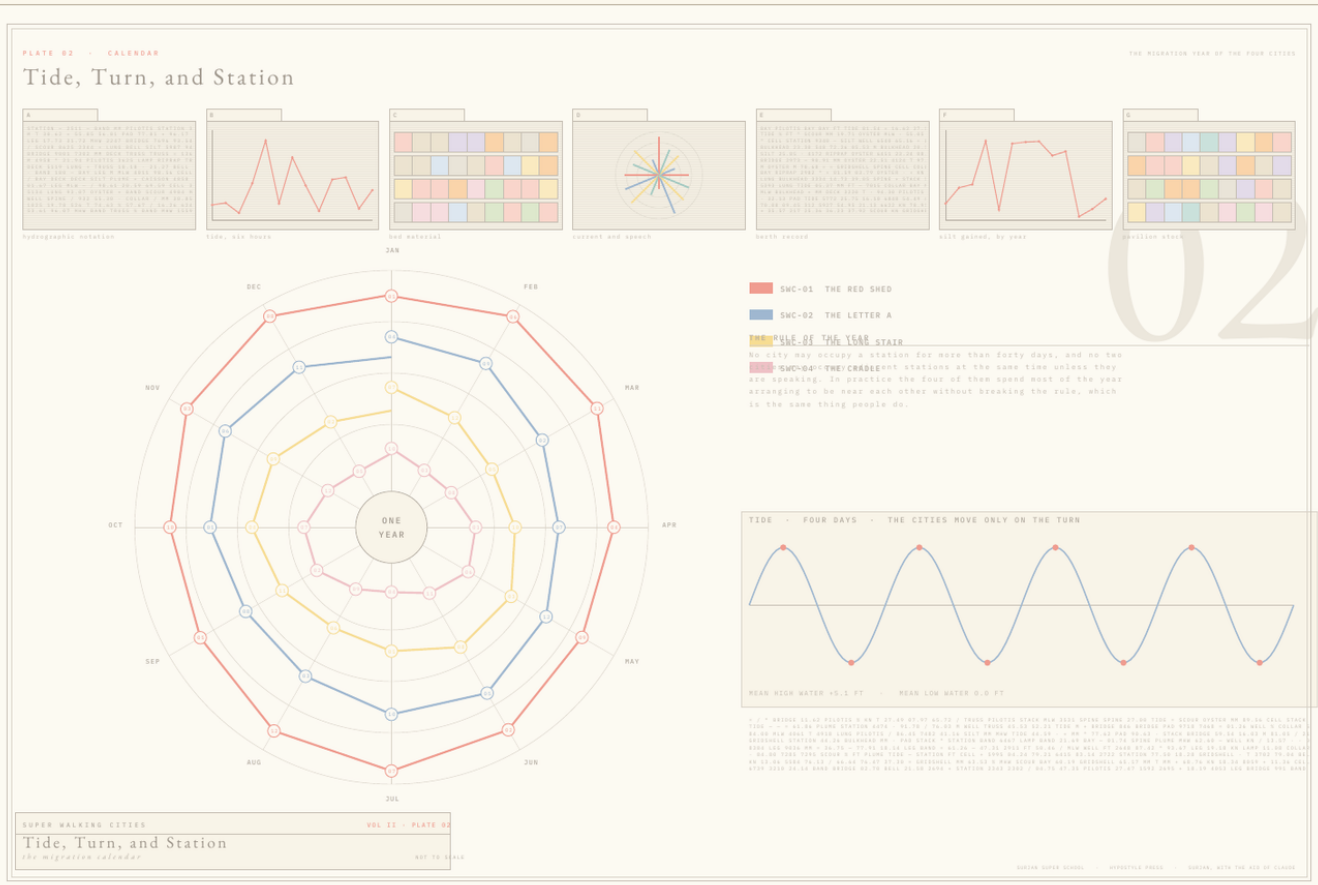
PLATE 02 · CALENDAR
Tide, Turn, and Station
THE MIGRATION YEAR OF THE FOUR CITIES
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
hydrographic notation
tide, six hours
bed material
current and speech
berth record
silt gained, by year
pavilion stock
JAN
FEB
MAR
APR
MAY
JUN
JUL
AUG
SEP
OCT
NOV
DEC
ONE YEAR
SWC-01 THE RED SHED
SWC-02 THE LETTER A
SWC-03 THE LONG STAIR
SWC-04 THE CRADLE
THE RULE OF THE YEAR
No city may occupy a station for more than forty days, and no two cities may occupy adjacent stations at the same time unless they are speaking. In practice the four of them spend most of the year arranging to be near each other without breaking the rule, which is the same thing people do.
02
TIDE · FOUR DAYS · THE CITIES MOVE ONLY ON THE TURN
MEAN HIGH WATER +5.1 FT · MEAN LOW WATER 0.0 FT
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 02
Tide, Turn, and Station
the migration calendar
NOT TO SCALE
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HYPERTYLE PRESS · SURJAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE

II · PLATE 02

Tide, Turn, and Station

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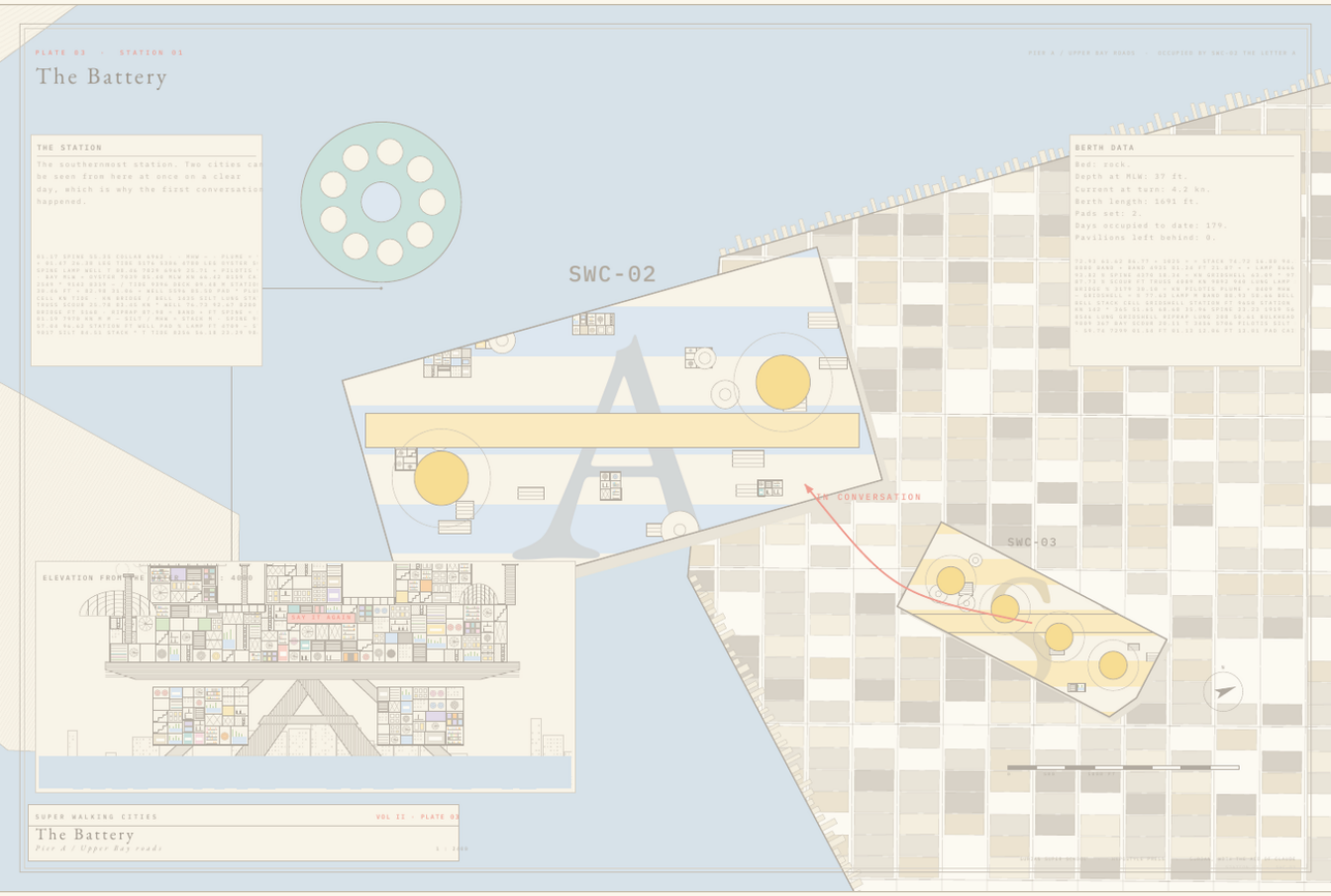

II · PLATE 03

Station One: The Battery

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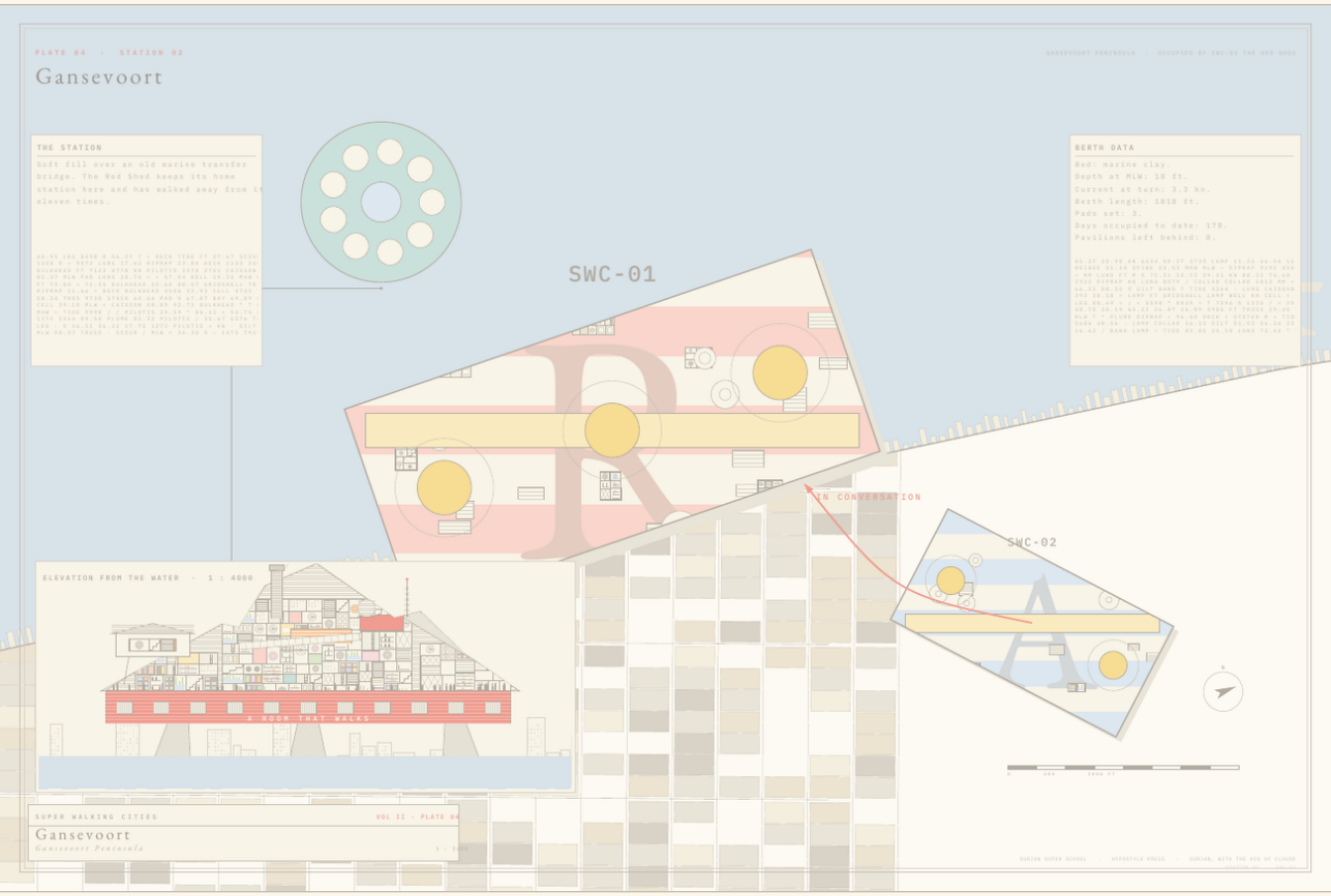

II · PLATE 04

Station Two: Gansevoort

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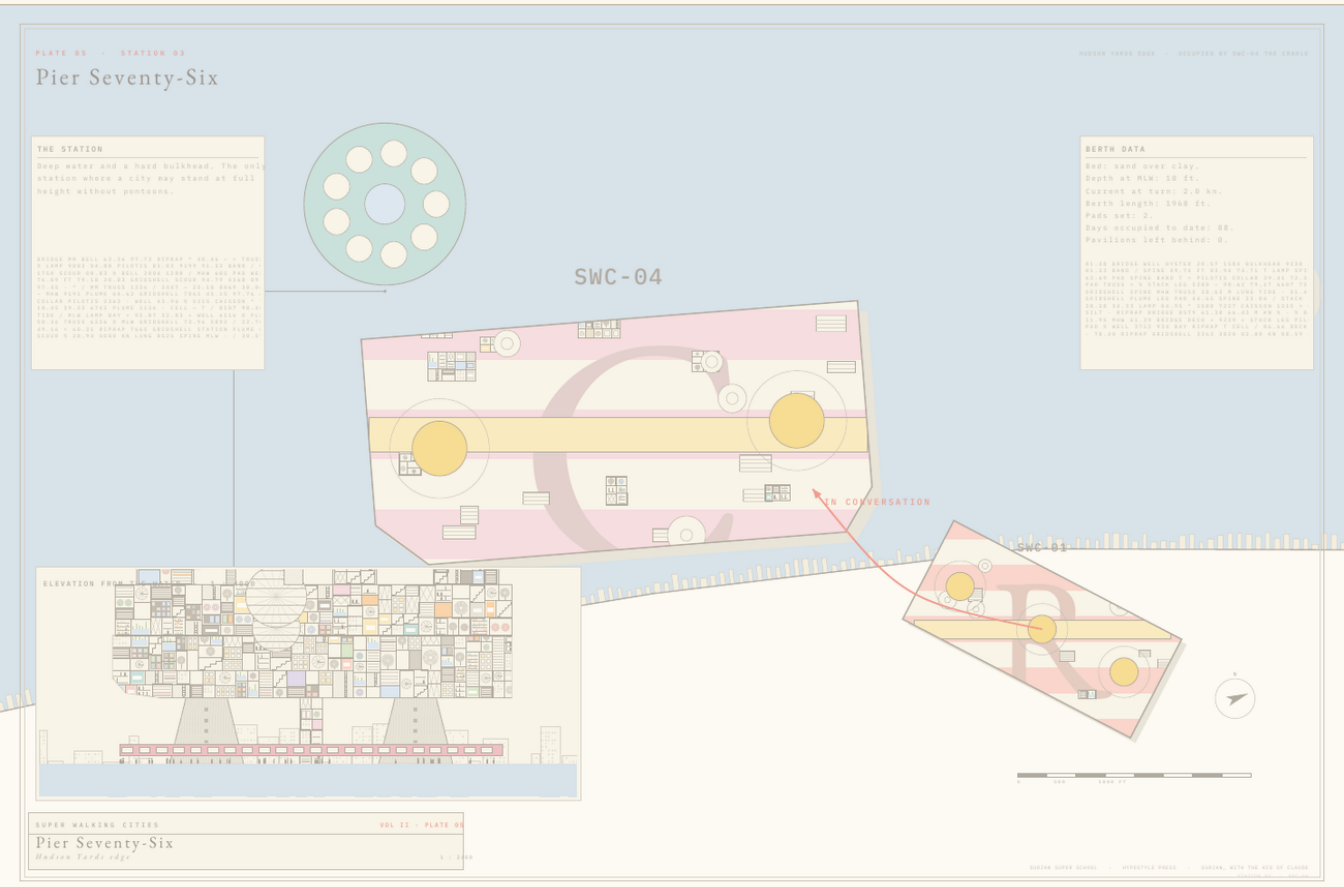
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL



II · PLATE 05

Station Three: Pier Seventy-Six

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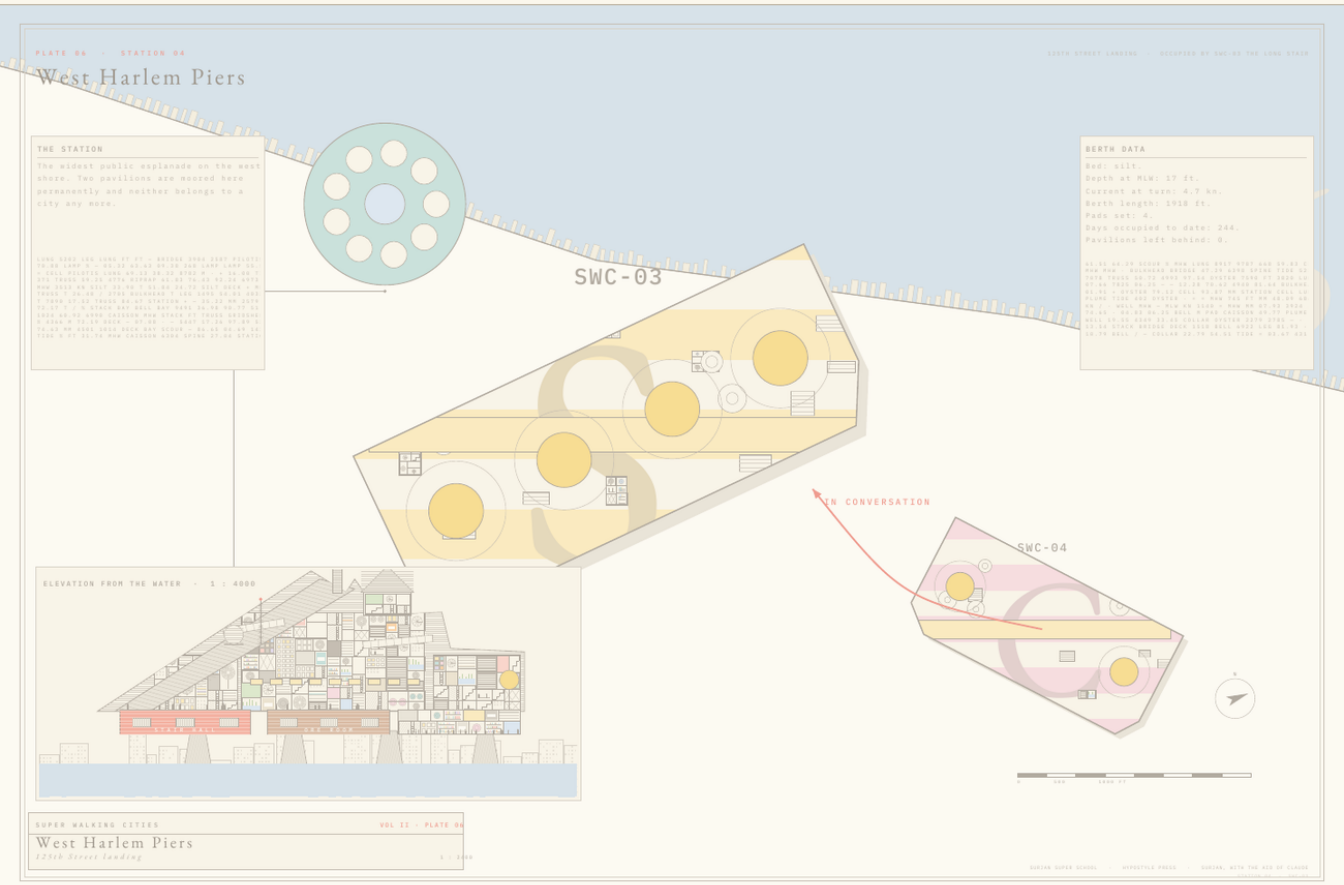


PLATE 06 · STATION 04
West Harlem Piers
THE STATION
The widest public esplanade on the west shore. Two pavilions are moored here permanently and neither belongs to a city any more.
BERTH DATA
Bed: silt.
Depth at MLW: 17 ft.
Current at turn: 4.7 kn.
Berth length: 1918 ft.
Pads set: 4.
Days occupied to date: 244.
Pavilions left behind: 0.
SWC-03
IN CONVERSATION
SWC-04
ELEVATION FROM THE WATER · 1 : 4000
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 06
West Harlem Piers
125th Street landing

II · PLATE 06

Station Four: West Harlem Piers

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

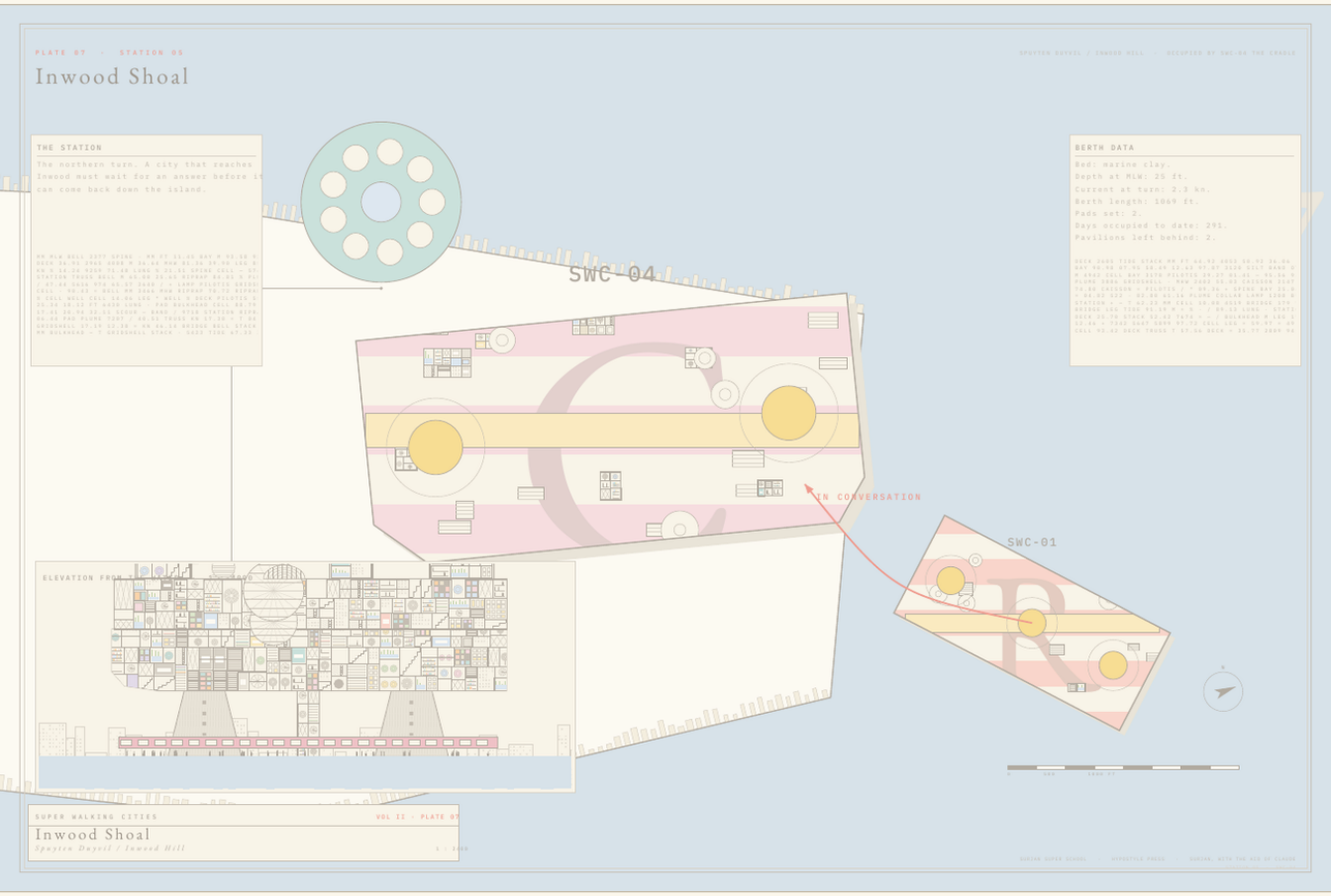


PLATE 07 · STATION 05
Inwood Shoal
THE STATION
The northern turn. A city that reaches Inwood must wait for an answer before it can come back down the island.
BERTH DATA
Bed: marine clay.
Depth at MLW: 25 ft.
Current at turn: 2.3 kn.
Berth length: 1069 ft.
Pads set: 2.
Days occupied to date: 291.
Pavilions left behind: 2.
SWC-04
IN CONVERSATION
SWC-01
ELEVATION FROM
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 07
Inwood Shoal
Spuyten Duyvil / Inwood Hill

II · PLATE 07

Station Five: Inwood Shoal

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

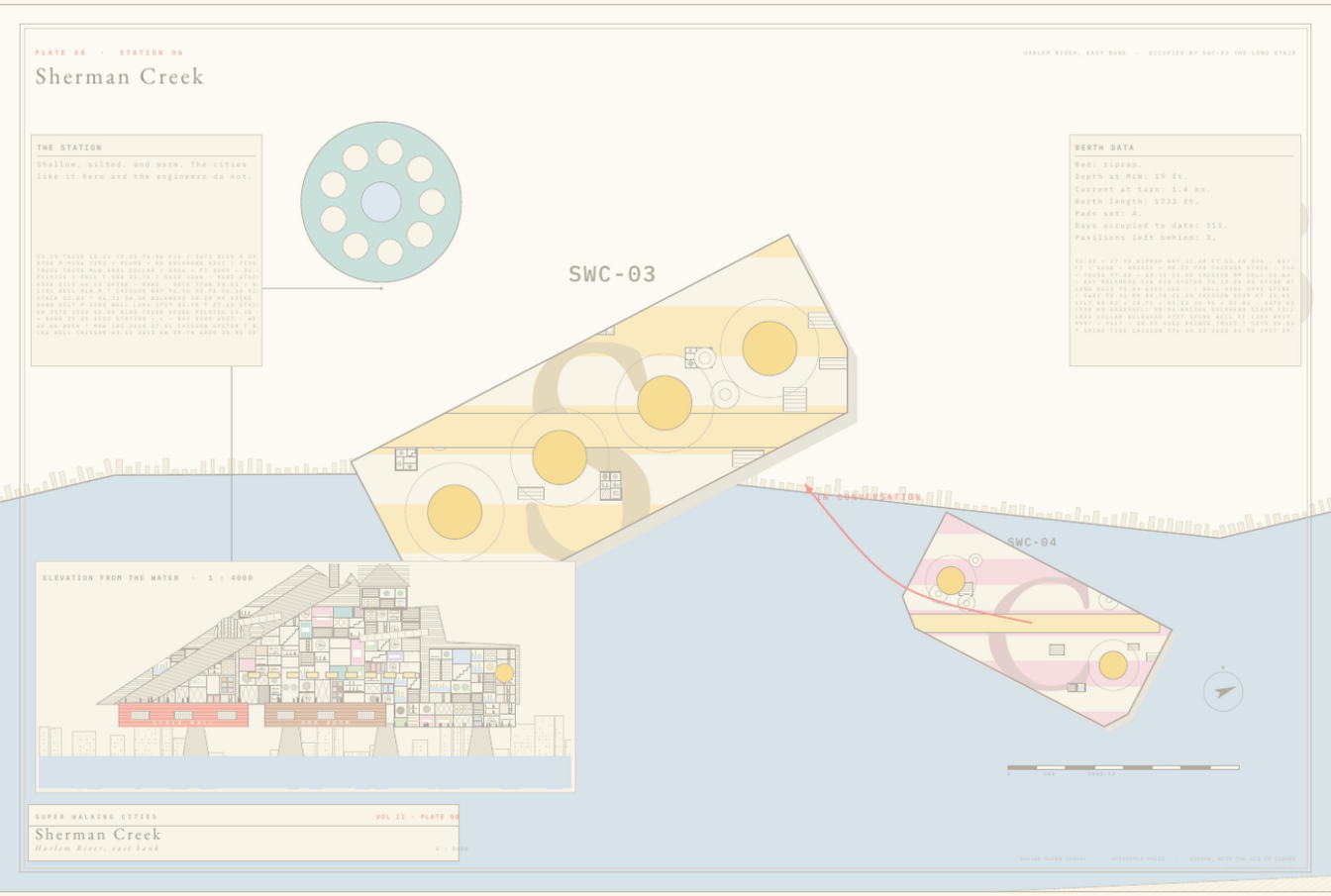


PLATE 08 · STATION 06
Sherman Creek
HARLEM RIVER, EAST BANK · OCCUPIED BY SWC-03 THE LONG STAIR
THE STATION
Shallow, silted, and warm. The cities like it here and the engineers do not.
BERTH DATA
Bed: riprap.
Depth at MLW: 19 ft.
Current at turn: 1.4 kn.
Berth length: 1733 ft.
Pads set: 4.
Days occupied to date: 315.
Pavilions left behind: 3.
SWC-03
SWC-04
TO CONFLUENCE
ELEVATION FROM THE WATER · 1 : 4000
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 08
Sherman Creek
Harlem River, east bank
1 : 4000

II · PLATE 08

Station Six: Sherman Creek

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

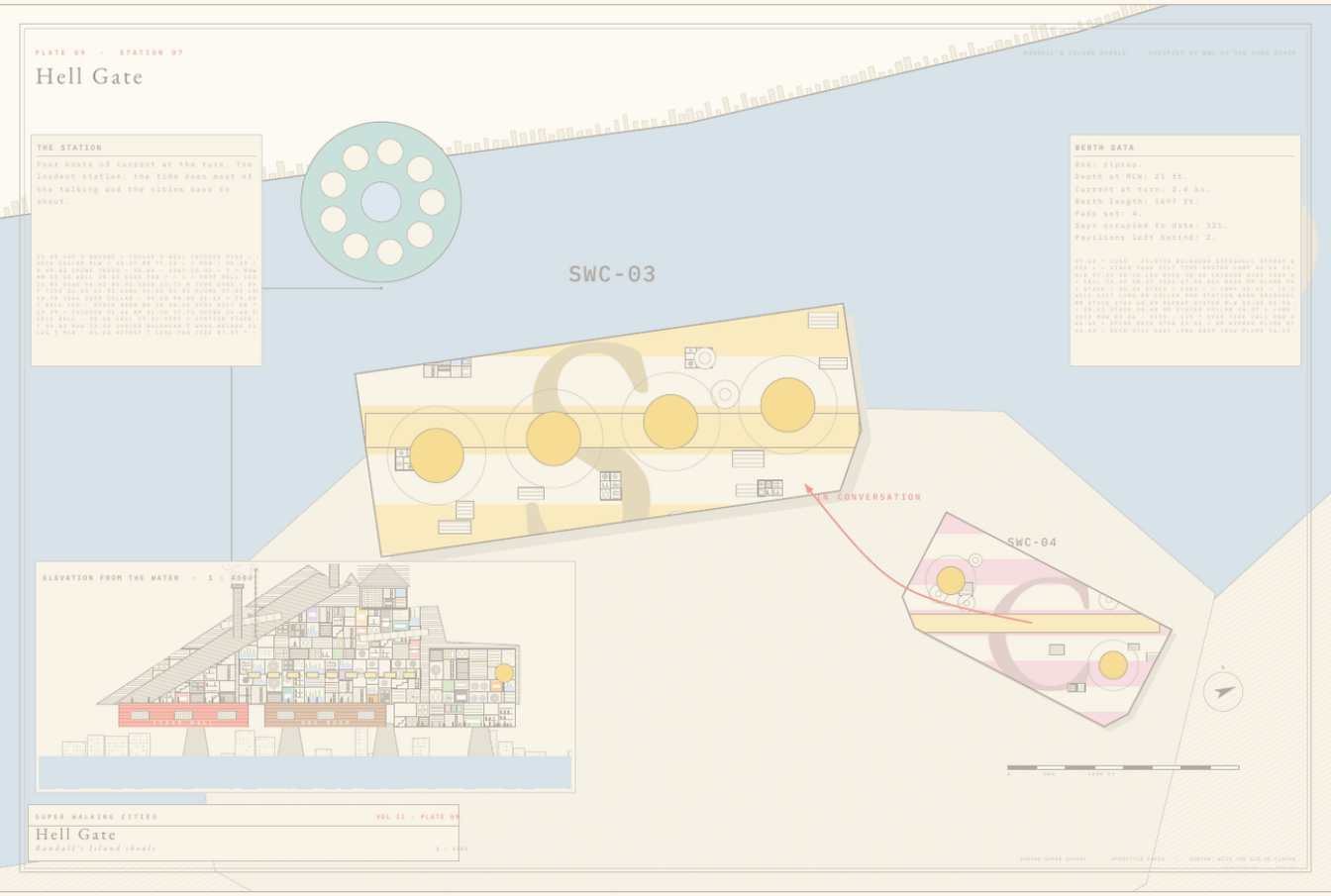


PLATE 09 · STATION 07
Hell Gate
THE STATION
Four knots of current at the turn. The loudest station: the tide does most of the talking and the cities have to shout.
BERTH DATA
Bed: riprap.
Depth at MLW: 21 ft.
Current at turn: 3.4 kn.
Berth length: 1697 ft.
Pads set: 4.
Days occupied to date: 321.
Pavilions left behind: 2.
SWC-03
IN CONVERSATION
SWC-04
ELEVATION FROM THE WATER · 1 : 4000
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 09
Hell Gate
Randall's Island shoals

II · PLATE 09

Station Seven: Hell Gate

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

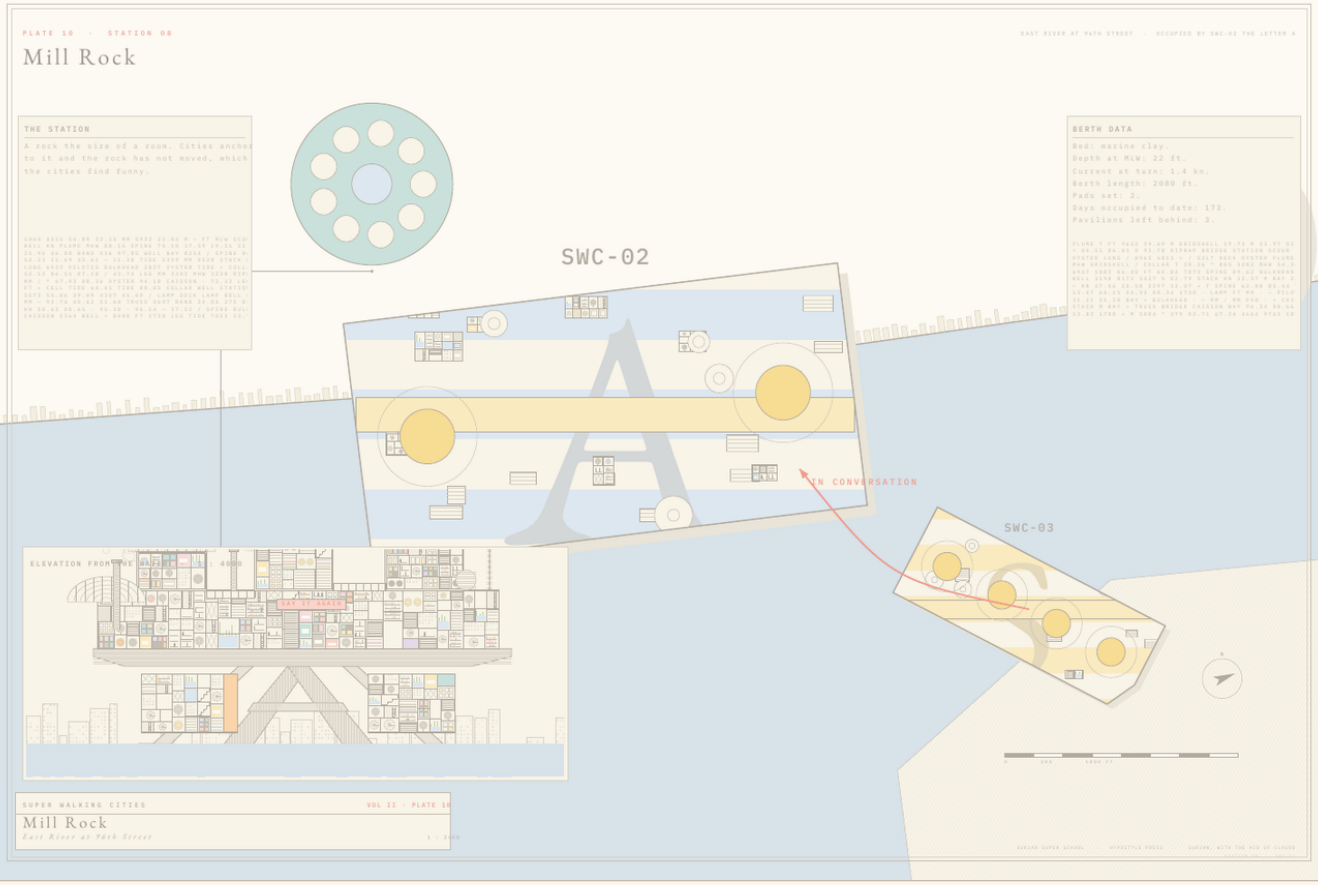


PLATE 10 · STATION 08
Mill Rock
EAST RIVER AT 90TH STREET · OCCUPIED BY SWC-02 THE LETTER A
THE STATION
A rock the size of a room. Cities anchor to it and the rock has not moved, which the cities find funny.
BERTH DATA
Bed: marine clay.
Depth at MLW: 22 ft.
Current at turn: 1.4 kn.
Berth length: 2000 ft.
Pads set: 2.
Days occupied to date: 173.
Pavilions left behind: 3.
SWC-02
IN CONVERSATION
SWC-03
ELEVATION FROM
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 10
Mill Rock
East River at 90th Street

II · PLATE 10

Station Eight: Mill Rock

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

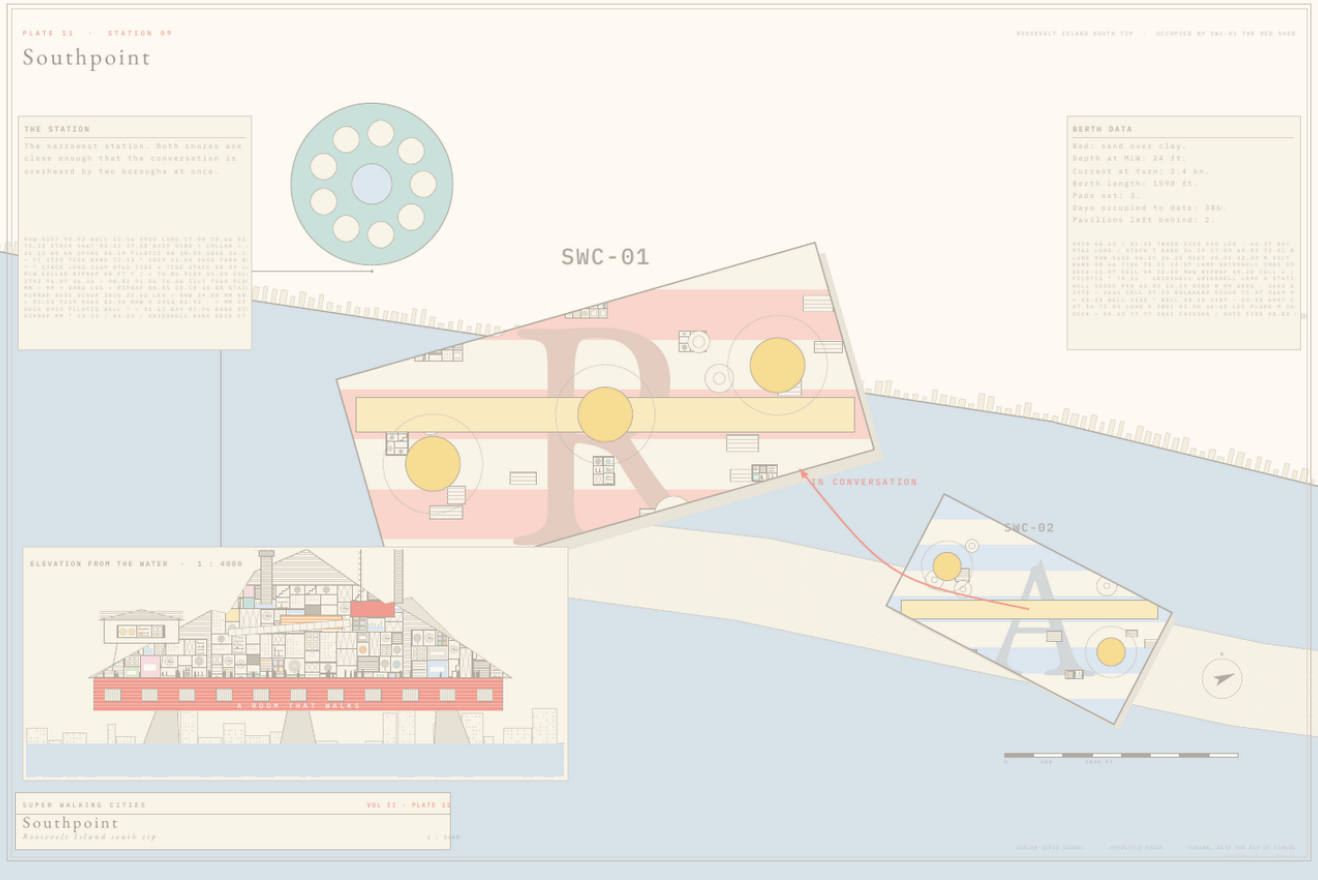


PLATE 11 · STATION 09
Southpoint
ROOSEVELT ISLAND SOUTH TIP · OCCUPIED BY SWC-01 THE RED SHED
THE STATION
The narrowest station. Both shores are close enough that the conversation is overheard by two boroughs at once.
BERTH DATA
Bed: sand over clay.
Depth at MLW: 24 ft.
Current at turn: 2.4 kn.
Berth length: 1590 ft.
Pads set: 3.
Days occupied to date: 386.
Pavilions left behind: 2.
SWC-01
IN CONVERSATION
SWC-02
ELEVATION FROM THE WATER · 1 : 4000
A ROOM THAT WALKS
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 11
Southpoint
Roosevelt Island south tip
1 : 4000
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HEMISTYLE PRESS · SURJAN, WITH THE RED SHED CLOSED

II · PLATE 11

Station Nine: Southpoint

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

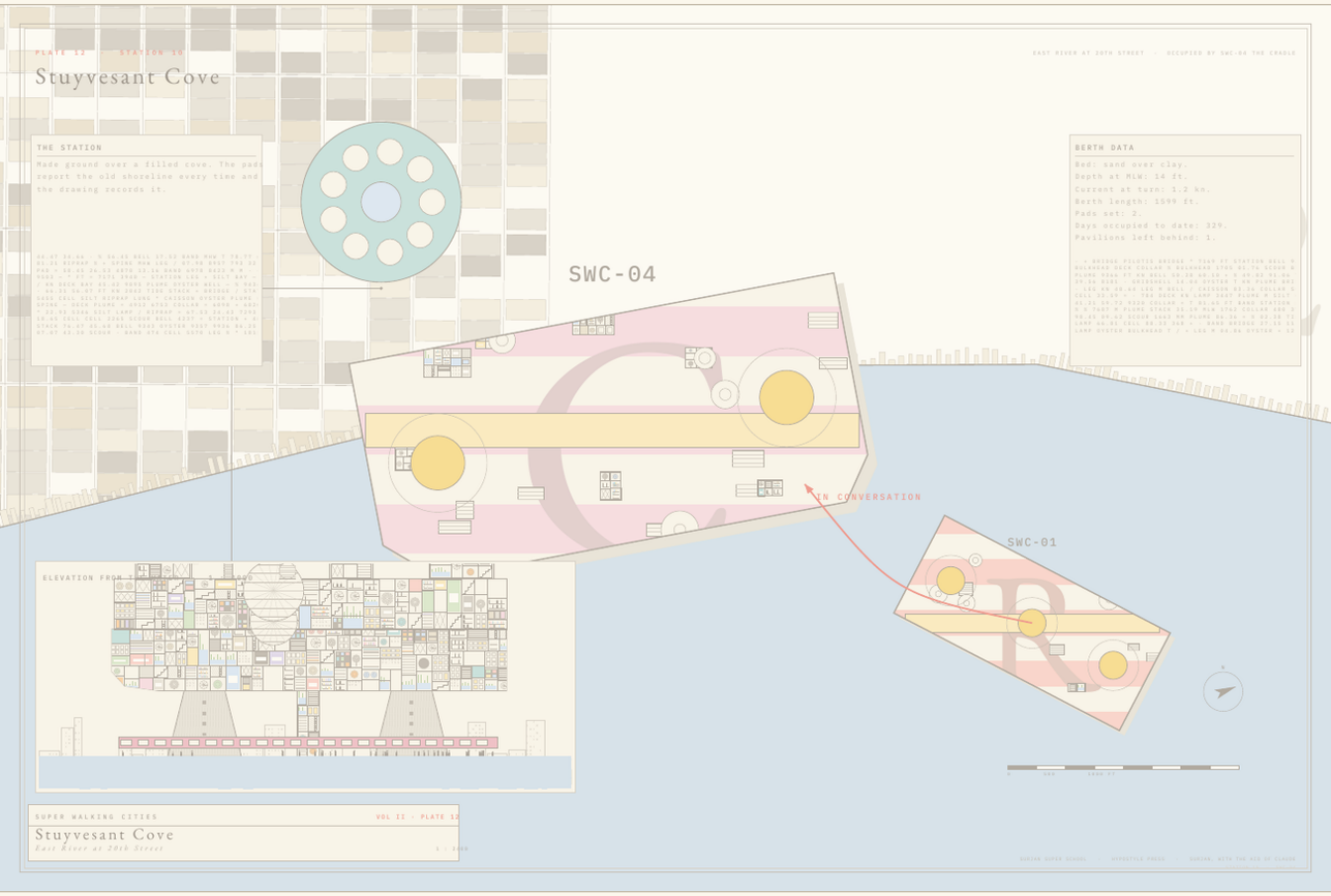


PLATE 12 · STATION 10
Stuyvesant Cove
THE STATION
Made ground over a filled cove. The pads report the old shoreline every time and the drawing records it.
BERTH DATA
Bed: sand over clay.
Depth at MLW: 14 ft.
Current at turn: 1.2 kn.
Berth length: 1599 ft.
Pads set: 2.
Days occupied to date: 329.
Pavilions left behind: 1.
EAST RIVER AT 20TH STREET · OCCUPIED BY SWC-04 THE CRADLE
SWC-04
IN CONVERSATION
SWC-01
ELEVATION FROM THE WATER
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 12
Stuyvesant Cove
East River at 20th Street

II · PLATE 12

Station Ten: Stuyvesant Cove

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

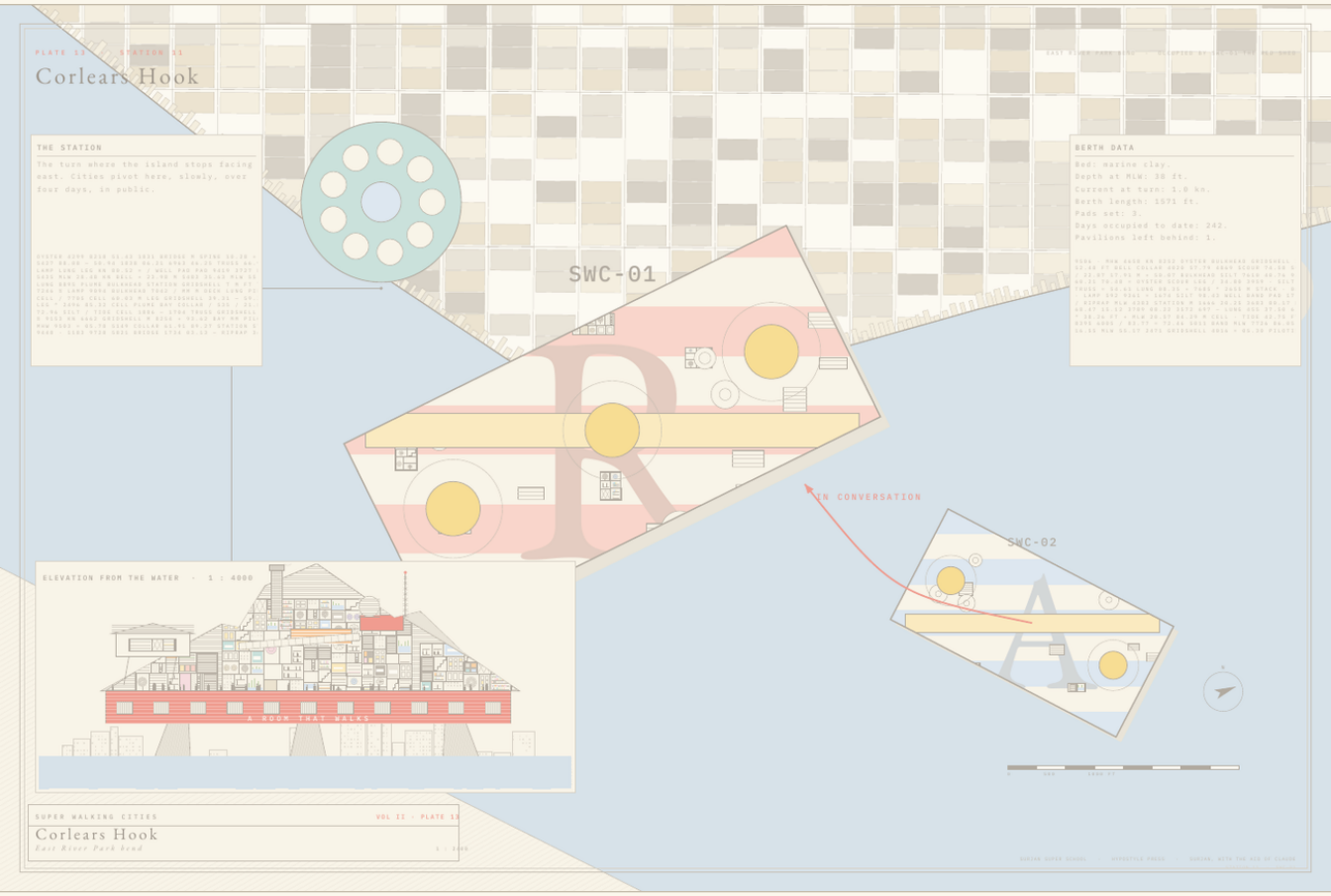


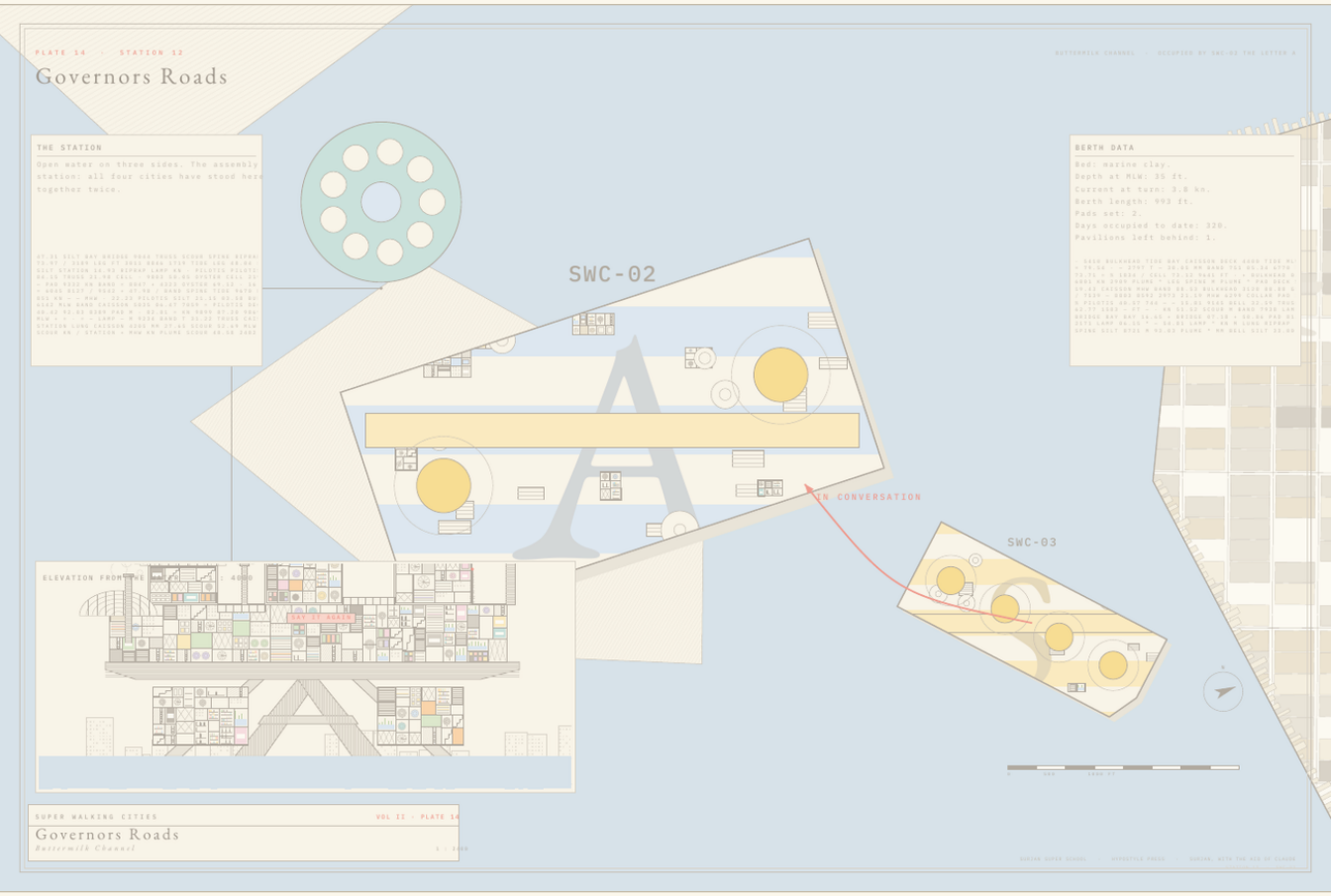
PLATE 13 · STATION 11
Corlears Hook
THE STATION
The turn where the island stops facing east. Cities pivot here, slowly, over four days, in public.
SWC-01
BERTH DATA
Bed: marine clay.
Depth at MLW: 38 ft.
Current at turn: 1.0 kn.
Berth length: 1671 ft.
Pads set: 3.
Days occupied to date: 242.
Pavilions left behind: 1.
IN CONVERSATION
SWC-02
ELEVATION FROM THE WATER · 1 : 4000
A ROOM THAT WALKS
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 13
Corlears Hook
East River Park bend

II · PLATE 13

Station Eleven: Corlears Hook

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL



II · PLATE 14

Station Twelve: Governors Roads

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

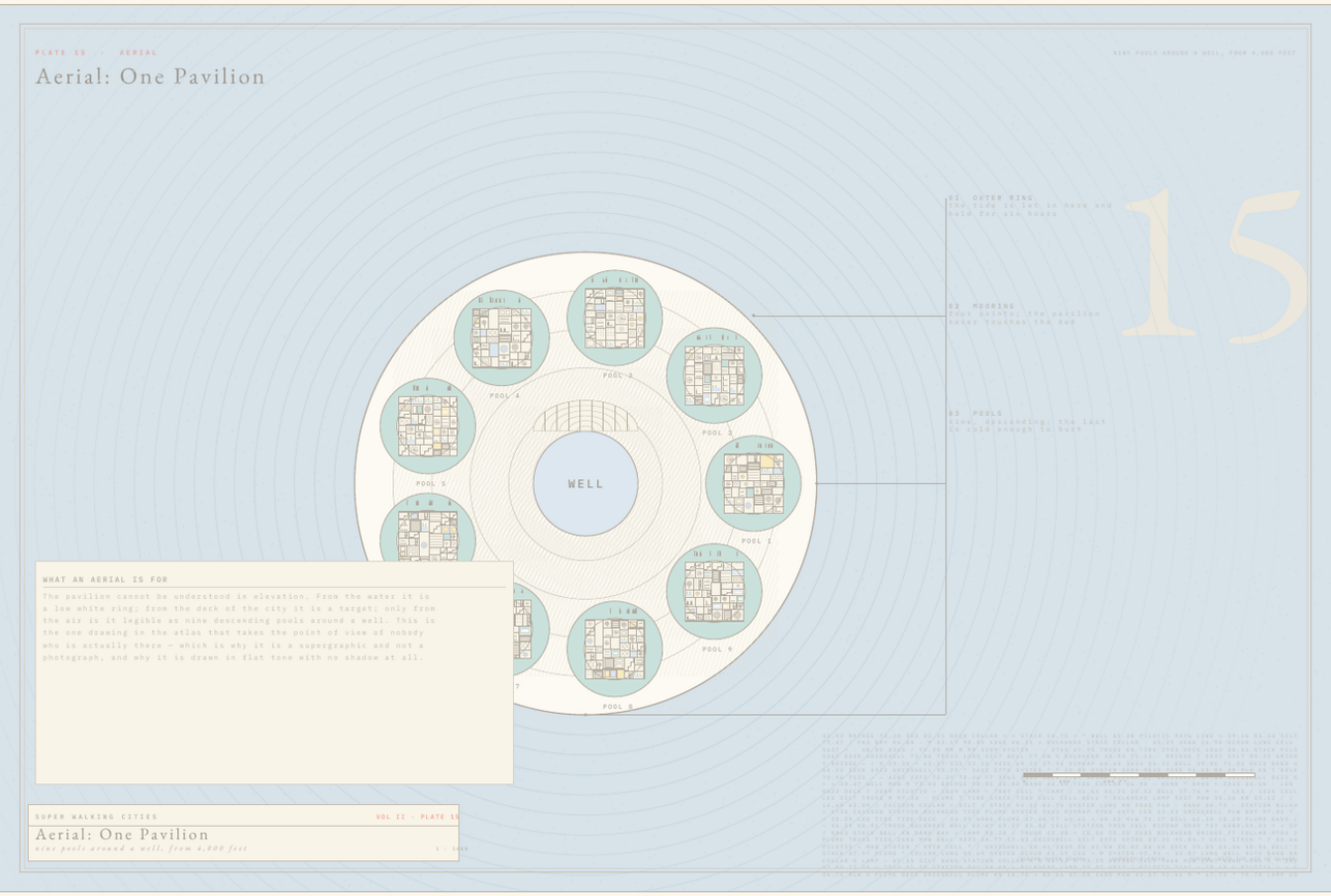


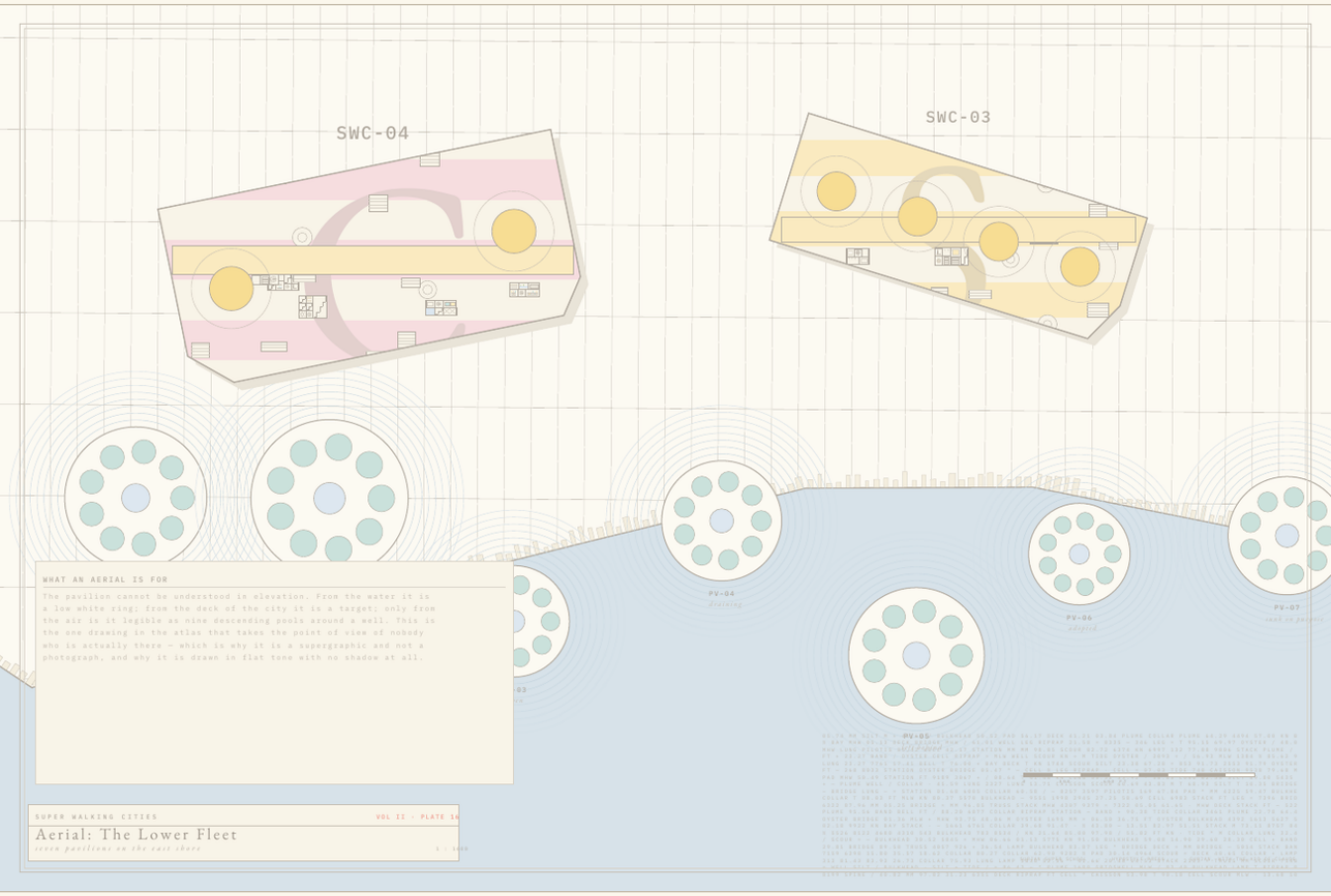
PLATE 15 · AERIAL
Aerial: One Pavilion
15
WELL
POOL 1
POOL 2
POOL 3
POOL 4
POOL 5
POOL 6
POOL 7
POOL 8
POOL 9
WHAT AN AERIAL IS FOR
The pavilion cannot be understood in elevation. From the water it is a low white ring; from the deck of the city it is a target; only from the air is it legible as nine descending pools around a well. This is the one drawing in the atlas that takes the point of view of nobody who is actually there — which is why it is a supergraphic and not a photograph, and why it is drawn in flat tone with no shadow at all.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 15
Aerial: One Pavilion
nine pools around a well, from 4,000 feet

II · PLATE 15

Aerial: One Pavilion

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL


SWC-04
SWC-03
WHAT AN AERIAL IS FOR
The pavilion cannot be understood in elevation. From the water it is a low white ring; from the deck of the city it is a target; only from the air is it legible as nine descending pools around a well. This is the one drawing in the atlas that takes the point of view of nobody who is actually there — which is why it is a supergraphic and not a photograph, and why it is drawn in flat tone with no shadow at all.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 16
Aerial: The Lower Fleet
seven pavilions on the east shore

II · PLATE 16

Aerial: The Lower Fleet

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

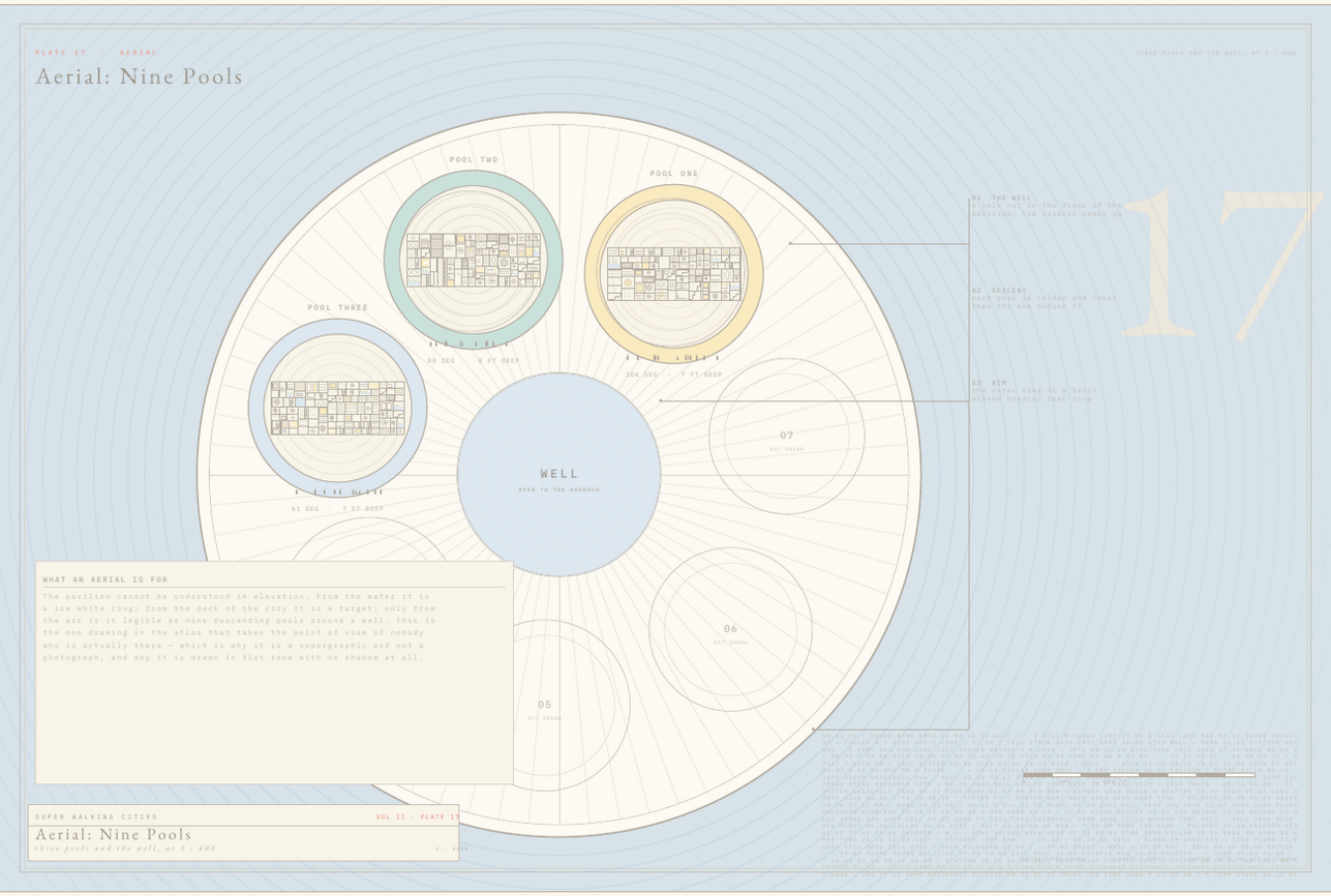


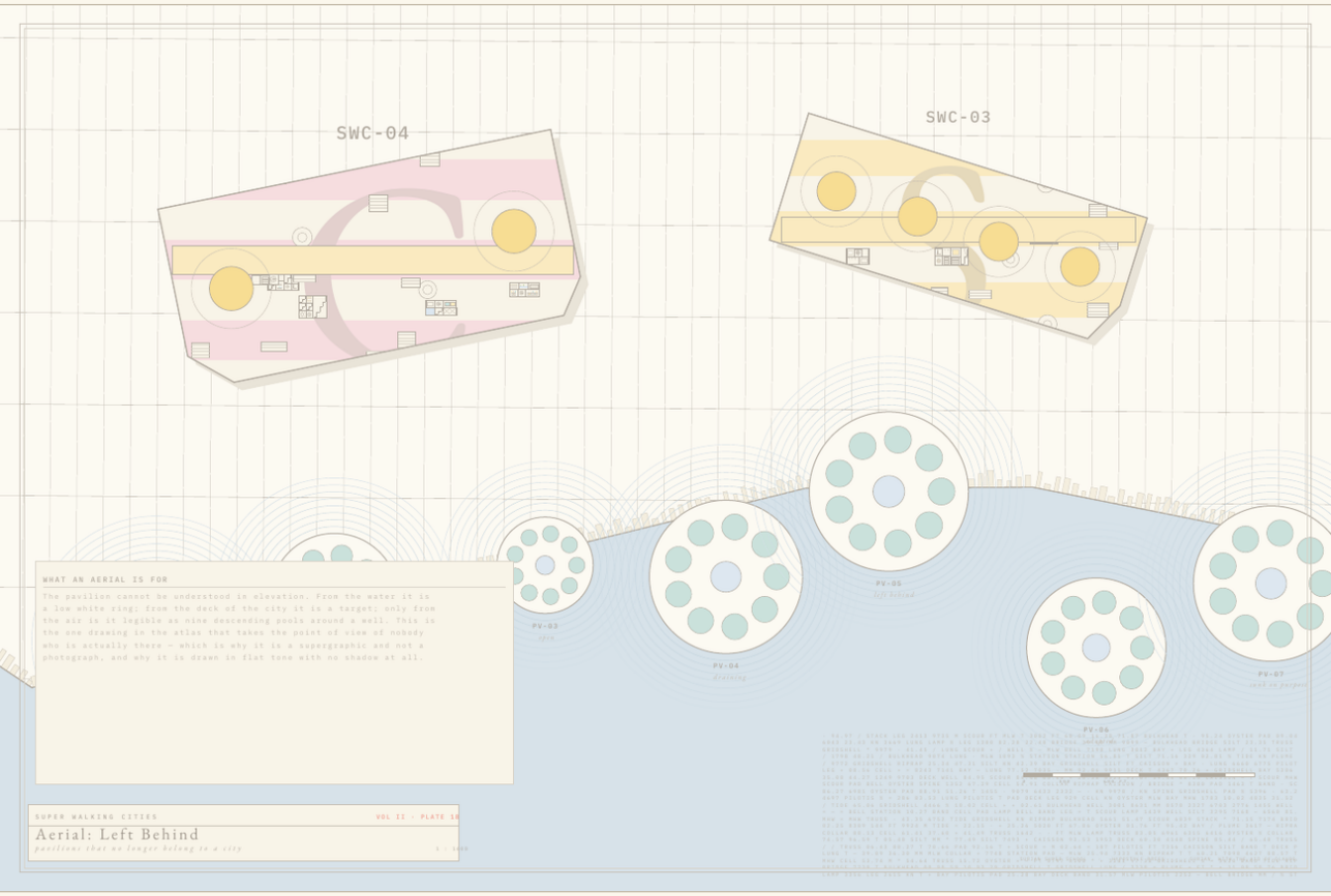
PLATE 17 · AERIAL
Aerial: Nine Pools
POOL TWO
POOL ONE
POOL THREE
WELL
OPEN TO THE HARBOUR
01 THE WELL
02 DESCENT
03 RIM
WHAT AN AERIAL IS FOR
The pavilion cannot be understood in elevation. From the water it is a low white ring; from the deck of the city it is a target; only from the air is it legible as nine descending pools around a well. This is the one drawing in the atlas that takes the point of view of nobody who is actually there — which is why it is a supergraphic and not a photograph, and why it is drawn in flat tone with no shadow at all.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 17
Aerial: Nine Pools
three pools and the well, at 1 : 400

II · PLATE 17

Aerial: Nine Pools

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL


SWC-04
SWC-03
WHAT AN AERIAL IS FOR
The pavilion cannot be understood in elevation. From the water it is a low white ring; from the deck of the city it is a target; only from the air is it legible as nine descending pools around a well. This is the one drawing in the atlas that takes the point of view of nobody who is actually there — which is why it is a supergraphic and not a photograph, and why it is drawn in flat tone with no shadow at all.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 18
Aerial: Left Behind
pavilions that no longer belong to a city

II · PLATE 18

Aerial: Left Behind

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

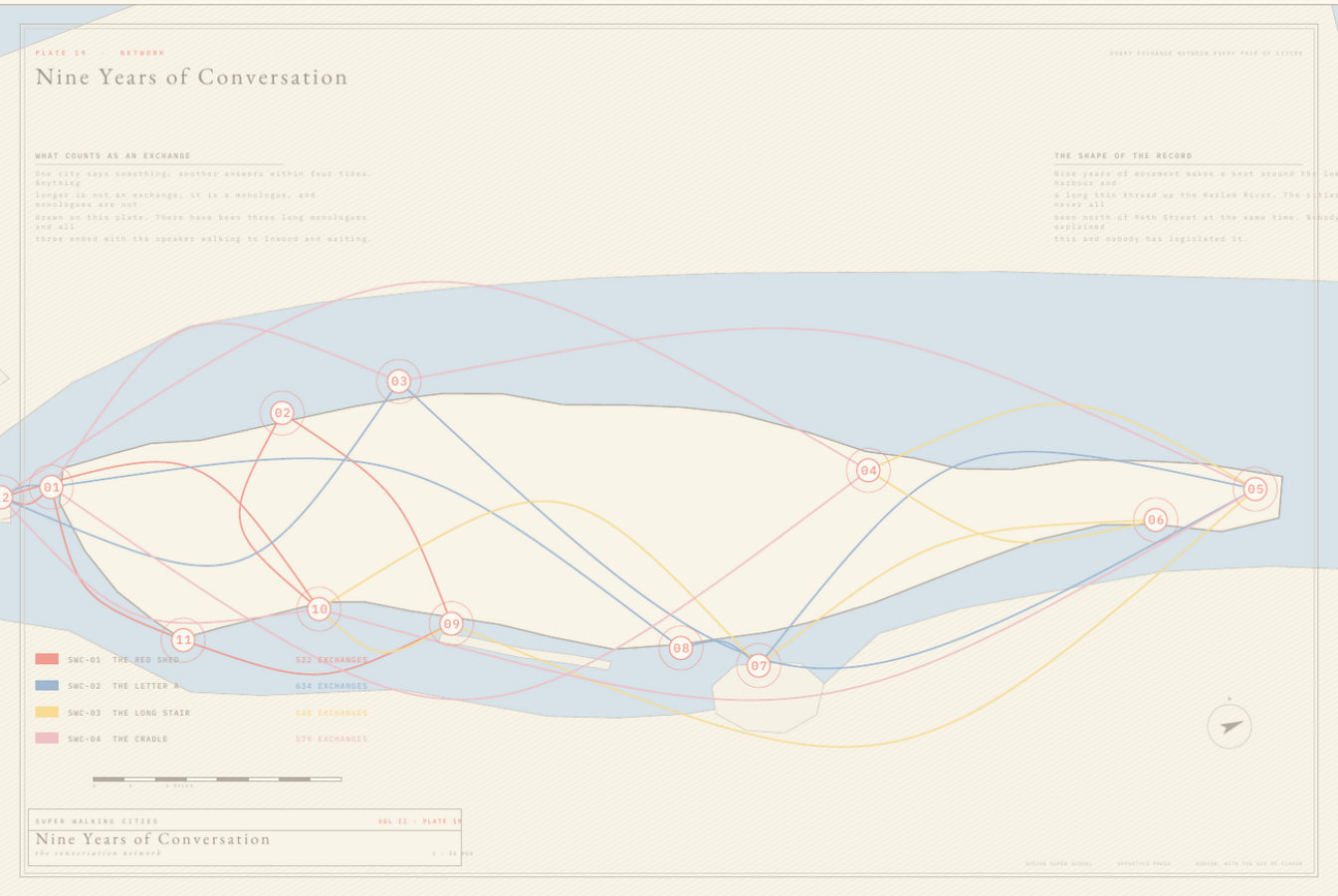


PLATE 19 · NETWORK
Nine Years of Conversation
EVERY EXCHANGE BETWEEN EVERY PAIR OF CITIES
WHAT COUNTS AS AN EXCHANGE
One city says something; another answers within four tides. Anything longer is not an exchange, it is a monologue, and monologues are not drawn on this plate. There have been three long monologues and all three ended with the speaker walking to Inwood and waiting.
THE SHAPE OF THE RECORD
Nine years of movement makes a knot around the harbour and a long thin thread up the Harlem River. The cities never all been north of 96th Street at the same time. Nobody explained this and nobody has legislated it.
01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10
11
SWC-01 THE RED SHED 522 EXCHANGES
SWC-02 THE LETTER A 634 EXCHANGES
SWC-03 THE LONG STAIR 548 EXCHANGES
SWC-04 THE CRADLE 579 EXCHANGES
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 19
Nine Years of Conversation
the conversation network

II · PLATE 19

Nine Years of Conversation

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

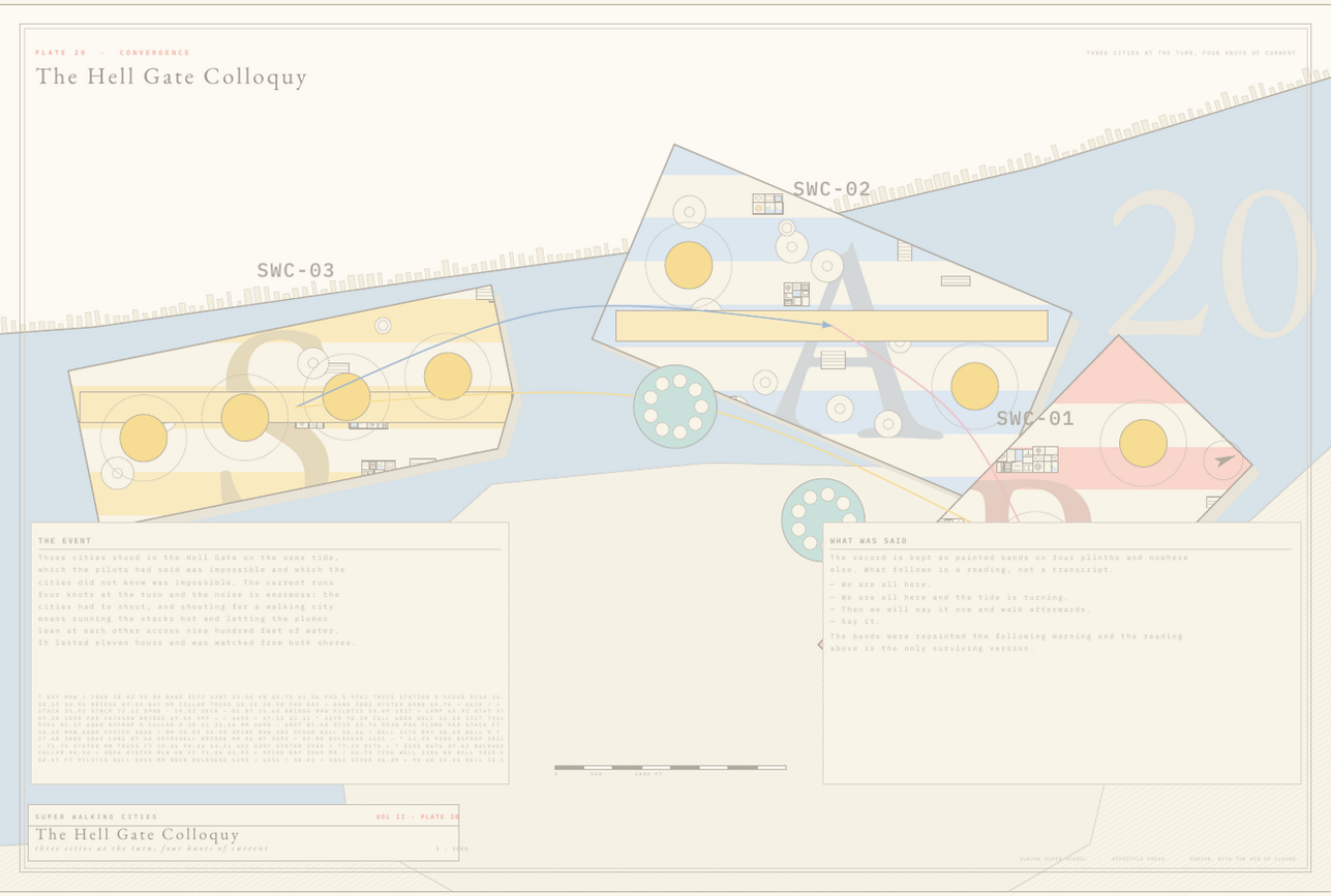


PLATE 20 · CONVERGENCE
The Hell Gate Colloquy
THREE CITIES AT THE TURN, FOUR KNOTS OF CURRENT
SWC-02
SWC-03
SWC-01
20
THE EVENT
Three cities stood in the Hell Gate on the same tide,
which the pilots had said was impossible and which the
cities did not know was impossible. The current runs
four knots at the turn and the noise is enormous: the
cities had to shout, and shouting for a walking city
means running the stacks hot and letting the plumes
lean at each other across nine hundred feet of water.
It lasted eleven hours and was watched from both shores.
WHAT WAS SAID
The record is kept as painted bands on four plinths and nowhere
else. What follows is a reading, not a transcript.
– We are all here.
– We are all here and the tide is turning.
– Then we will say it now and walk afterwards.
– Say it.
The bands were repainted the following morning and the reading
above is the only surviving version.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 20
The Hell Gate Colloquy
three cities at the turn, four knots of current

II · PLATE 20

The Hell Gate Colloquy

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

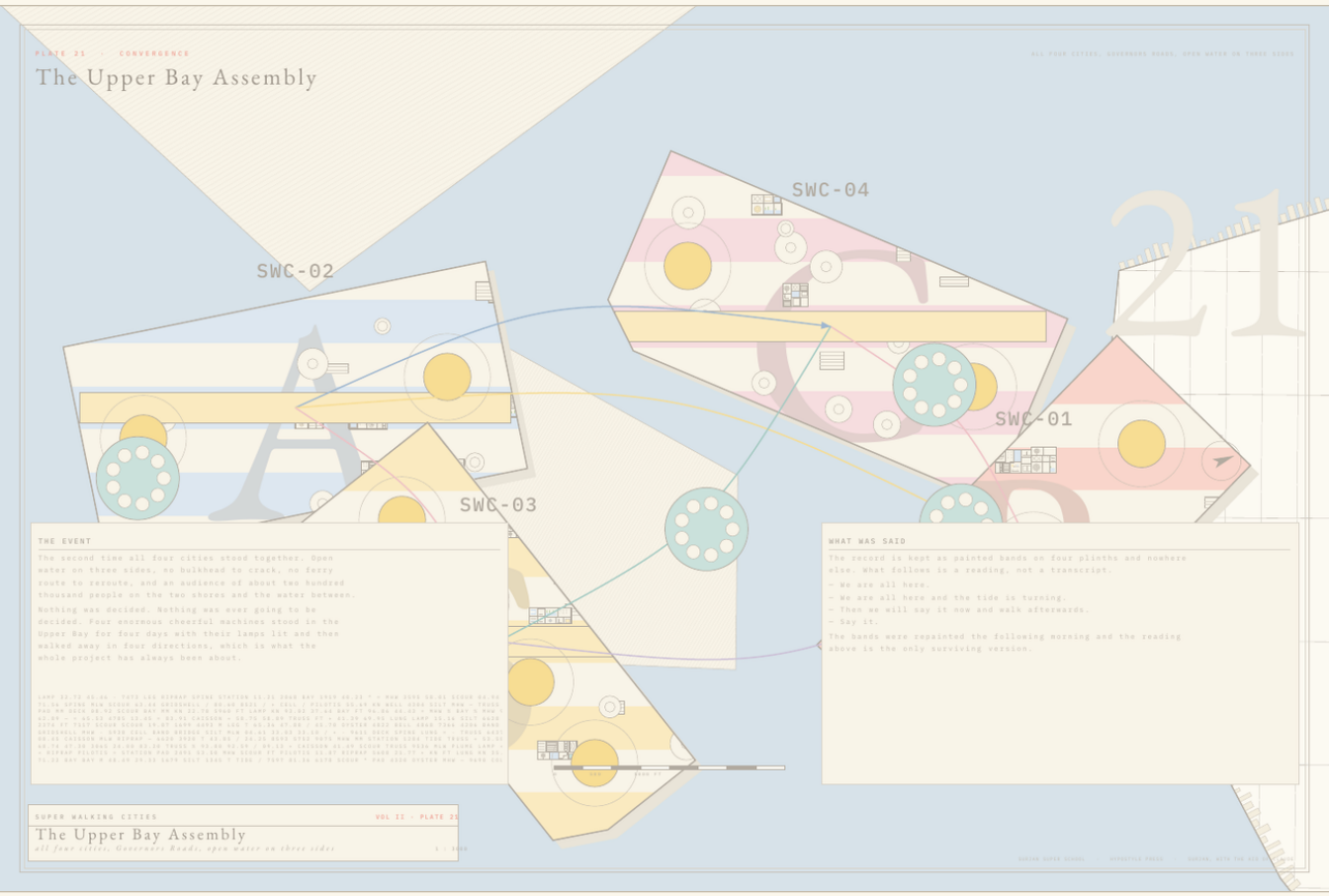


PLATE 21 · CONVERGENCE
The Upper Bay Assembly
ALL FOUR CITIES, GOVERNORS ROADS, OPEN WATER ON THREE SIDES
SWC-02
SWC-04
SWC-01
SWC-03
21
THE EVENT
The second time all four cities stood together. Open water on three sides, no bulkhead to crack, no ferry route to reroute, and an audience of about two hundred thousand people on the two shores and the water between.
Nothing was decided. Nothing was ever going to be decided. Four enormous cheerful machines stood in the Upper Bay for four days with their lamps lit and then walked away in four directions, which is the whole project has always been about.
WHAT WAS SAID
The record is kept as painted bands on four plinths and nowhere else. What follows is a reading, not a transcript.
– We are all here.
– We are all here and the tide is turning.
– Then we will say it now and walk afterwards.
– Say it.
The bands were repainted the following morning and the reading above is the only surviving version.
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 21
The Upper Bay Assembly
all four cities, Governors Roads, open water on three sides
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HEPBOTTLE PRESS · SURJAN, WITH THE KIDS

II · PLATE 21

The Upper Bay Assembly

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

PLATE 22 · RECORD
Wake and Bed
WHAT NINE YEARS OF WALKING LEFT ON THE SHORELINE
THE LEDGER
1,940 pad basins cut into the shoreline over nine years.
Every one has filled. 61 acres of new intertidal ground.
Ribbon weed at 14 stations; oysters at 9; both at 6.
Water temperature at the bulkhead down 1.1 °C in summer.
Eleven pavilions abandoned and all eleven still in use.
THE OTHER LEDGER
Four bulkheads cracked and rebuilt at public expense.
One ferry route permanently rerouted. Two marinas cl
Nineteen thousand complaints, of which four thousand
about the noise and the rest about the principle.
Both ledgers are printed here at the same size becau
atlas does not know how to weigh them against each o
and does not think a drawing should pretend to.
01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10
11
YEAR 1
YEAR 2
YEAR 3
YEAR 4
YEAR 5
YEAR 6
YEAR 7
YEAR 8
YEAR 9
SUPER WALKING CITIES
VOL II · PLATE 22
Wake and Bed
what the walking left behind

II · PLATE 22

Wake and Bed

24 × 16 IN

SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

PLATE 23 · APPARATUS

Index & Colophon

00 Cover
01 The Twelve Stations
02 Tide, Turn, and Station
03 Station 01 — The Battery
04 Station 02 — Gansevoort
05 Station 03 — Pier Seventy-Six
06 Station 04 — West Harlem Piers
07 Station 05 — Inwood Shoal
08 Station 06 — Sherman Creek
09 Station 07 — Hell Gate
10 Station 08 — Mill Rock
11 Station 09 — Southpoint
12 Station 10 — Stuyvesant Cove
13 Station 11 — Corlears Hook
14 Station 12 — Governors Roads
15 Aerial: One Pavilion
16 Aerial: The Lower Fleet
17 Aerial: Nine Pools
18 Aerial: Left Behind
19 Nine Years of Conversation
20 Convergence: Hell Gate Colloquy
21 Convergence: Upper Bay Assembly
22 Wake and Bed
23 Index & Colophon

END OF VOLUME II

COLOPHON

SUPER WALKING CITIES · VOLUME II : SHORELINE — SITING & CONVERSATIONS
Twenty-four full-bleed plates, 24 × 16 inches, landscape.

Twelve speculative stations around the shoreline of Manhattan, each drawn as a site plan at 1:2400 with the walking city deliberately overscaled against the island — because the island is the thing being argued with, and an accurate drawing of the argument would be too small to see.

Manhattan is projected from geographic coordinates and rotated 64° so that the Commissioners' grid lies flat on the plate. The Battery is always at the left hand.

Drawn procedurally in Python and ReportLab. EB Garamond for argument. IBM Plex Mono for notation. Thirty tones; darkest ink #46362 warm taupe; no black and no dark colour anywhere, verified at pixel level.

SURJAN, WITH THE AID OF CLAUDE
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL · HYPOSTYLE PRESS
surjansuperschool.com

23

THEY ARE MOVING BECAUSE THEY ARE TALKING

SUPER WALKING CITIES VOL II · PLATE 23
Index & Colophon
end of volume two

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II · PLATE 23
Index & Colophon

24 × 16 IN
SURJAN SUPER SCHOOL

Colophon

STAND STILL, LOOK UP is a masque in three parts — twelve stations, twelve small sciences, and eighteen days — spoken by citizens of Manhattan, arranged by Surjan on the instruction of a committee that had voted him out of the middle of his own book, and set procedurally in Python and ReportLab at seven by ten inches.

Argument is set in EB Garamond. Notation, folios, and the lamp code are set in IBM Plex Mono. The twenty plates were drawn as vector supergraphics for this volume and appear nowhere else.

The palette was opened upward for this book: coral, flame, sun, lime, grass, jade, sky, cobalt, violet, magenta, rose, and cream were added to the closed thirty of the atlas. The prohibition stands. No black and no dark colour appears on any page. The darkest ink is a warm taupe, #6E6152, and every channel of every mark in this book sits at or above 82, verified at pixel level.

The table of contents carries no dot leaders. A space is enough.

Companion to SUPER WALKING CITIES, Volume I: An Anatomy, and Volume II: Shoreline — Siting & Conversations, both forty-eight plates at twenty-four by sixteen inches.

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